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Sally Catherine Gosling BA

**Sex and Gender Roles in Gentle and Noble Families,
c.1575-1660, with a particular focus
on marriage formation**

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in the discipline of history,
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Sally Gosling

Abstract

The thesis examines thinking about, and experiences of, gender roles and family relationships for the gentry and nobility, particularly through the process of marriage formation. The study draws on a range of sources, including collections of family letters, personal memoirs and prescriptive literature. Some chapters pursue a case study approach to correspondence. Others consider the relationship between published advice and personal attitudes and experience.

The study explores whether there were contradictions in thinking on family life, gender, love and marriage, as some historians have claimed, and seeks to disentangle the overlaps and inter-relationships between these broad themes. While family and gender roles were multi-layered and multi-faceted, thinking and practice were neither incoherent nor conflicting. Rather, they were highly complex and treated as such. How marriages were forged and male and female roles in this process and in marriage itself required the balancing of many factors. Prescription recognised this and practice reinforced the need for pragmatism. Moreover, advice was not monolithic, but nuanced according to its purpose and intended audience. Gender roles, family relationships and marriage were varied and manifold within both the realms of rhetoric and experience. There was a strong elision of gender roles, affording women significant scope for decision-making. Family relationships were fluid, underpinned by a heavy dependence on, respect for, and emotional investment in, the extended family. Marriage formation was informed by recognition of the importance of a moral, disciplined love for sustaining marriages and families.

The thesis highlights the intricacies of relatively new (although increasingly well-researched) areas of study for historians. It seeks to undermine a simplistic division between prescription and practice, and between advisers and the advised, and to raise the importance of considering men within the family and facets of female authority.

Preface and acknowledgements

I should like to thank my supervisor, Professor Rosemary O'Day, for all her guidance and support. I am also grateful to my examiners, Professor Joan Thirsk and Dr. Ole Grell, for their comments on my thesis and for their suggestions as to questions and themes I might address in future work.

Throughout the thesis, original spellings have been retained where this does not obscure the meaning of quotations.

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Abbreviations

Add.MS	Additional manuscript
BL	British Library
Edn	Edition
ERO	Essex Record Office
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
MS	Manuscript
Trans	Translated by

Introduction

Several apparent contradictions appear in early-modern English thinking on gender roles and family relationships. These concern the responsibilities of men and women, affection and power, and how marriages should be forged. The marital conduct books placed a strong emphasis on patriarchy (in its broad sense, male domination of women and children, both within the family and in wider society; in a narrower sense, the economic and legal control held by a male head over his household).¹ They rehearsed detailed scripturally-based arguments to justify women's subordination to their husbands and the ramifications of this relationship for the proper ordering and functioning of households. But the treatises also stressed the importance of mutual affection and companionship within marriage and women's assuming an active role in household concerns. Meanwhile, advice on commerce urged that women should have the skills to perform responsible roles in a broader range of areas.

Personal documents, including letters, diaries and autobiographies, reveal that women of the gentry and nobility could - and did - wield considerable and unchallenged authority within, and on behalf of, their families. This took them well beyond the domestic sphere in which the marital conduct books sought to entrap them and gave them scope to make decisions that had major, long-term implications for their families. Negotiating and sanctioning marriages, a prime focus of this thesis, was much more than a domestic matter. It had far-reaching consequences for all concerned, linking one family with another, forming one of the most significant types of financial transaction that a family could make, and impacting on families' future prosperity and security. Moreover, the family was seen to play a major role in stabilising society. That women could exercise authority without being seen to subvert the natural order suggests that patriarchy was not as tight or absolute as might be assumed.

¹ G. Lerner *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford 1986) p.239; H. Barker & E. Chalus (eds.) *Gender in Eighteenth-century England. Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (Harlow 1997) p.15

Nonetheless, the marital conduct books asserted sex as the most fundamental division in human society. But treatises that advised on gentle conduct for men and women showed far less interest in sex and gender as divisional categories and a much stronger keenness to preserve and demonstrate nuances of social status. From them, the impression is gained that men and women of the same social standing were not perceived as so different from one another. Instead, they shared significantly overlapping responsibilities and were expected to display broadly similar attributes. This highlights the need for sensitivity to the contrasting messages that emerge from different genres.

On marriage formation itself, complex and varied views become evident. Parental imposition of matrimony on their children, involving little consideration of their emotional interests, has tended to form the received image of the way in which marriage occurred for those of gentle or noble birth. A simplistic reading of the marital conduct books goes some way to reinforce this.² But a detailed analysis of contemporary advice literature and personal documents shows that marriage formation in the upper social ranks was much more multifarious than can be described satisfactorily by the term 'arranged marriage', involving a far greater number and range of family members than just parents and demanding regard for a diversity of factors. Within this, personal happiness usually figured, although it was not 'romantic love' that was predominant. Indeed, early-modern attitudes towards love seem ambiguous: on the one hand, love was seen as an uncontrollable force, likely to work against the stability and prosperity of families and communities; on the other, it was deemed an essential ingredient in lasting and godly

² See R.A. Houlbrooke *The English Family 1450-1700* (Harlow 1984) p.77; S.W. Hull *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino 1982) pp.74-75; B. Hill *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-century England* (London 1994) pp.175-76; M. MacDonald *Mystical Bedlam. Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge 1981) p.91; R. Adair *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester 1996) p.130; see D. Cressy *Birth, Marriage and Death. Ritual, Religion and Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford 1997) p.234 for expressions of caution about drawing firm distinctions between courtship protocols according to social rank; see also R. Ballaster *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford 1992) p.35 and A. Sinfield *Literature in Protestant England 1560-1660* (London 1983) p.70 for comments about artistic works' demonstration of an obsession with affairs of the heart

relationships.³ Marriage, understandably, formed a watershed. However, there were strong views on the nature of acceptable and unacceptable love within wedlock, with a firm understanding of licit and illicit types and those that were likely to be longstanding and 'useful', informed by the notions of *eros*, *agape* and *caritas*.⁴

This thesis tackles these conundrums, seeking to discern whether apparently conflicting views can be squared and to rise to the challenge set by Collinson that it is difficult to construct "a coherent, credible picture of post-Reformation family life".⁵ Primarily through the prism of marriage formation, the thesis explores the delineation of sex roles within families, the construction of gendered identities, attitudes towards conjugal love, and expectations of marriage. It considers particularly how gentle and noble men and women married one another, with some consideration given to courtship and marriage among those of lower social rank, where possible.⁶ Who had a say in who married whom? What roles were played by the couple themselves? What factors influenced decision-making in the matchmaking process? How important was love (either established or prospective) in negotiations? What were seen as desirable attributes in prospective husbands and wives? And what kinds of expectations and attitudes emerge about the nature and experience of married life? The thesis considers what shaped marriages and how marriages were forged, as ends in themselves, as well as for the light these issues throw on family relationships and gender roles.

³ M.B. Rose *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca 1988) pp.4, 13

⁴ See D. de Rougemont *Love in the Western World*. Trans. M. Belgion. Rev.edn (New York 1956) pp.59-72; F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone (eds.) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford 1997) p.26

⁵ P. Collinson *The Birth-pangs of English Protestantism. Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London 1989) p.70

⁶ See J.A. Sharpe *Early Modern England. A Social History 1550-1760* 2nd edn (London 1997) pp.157-58; L. Stone & J.C. Fawtier Stone *An Open Elite? England 1540-1800* (Oxford 1984) pp.6-8; M. Wolfe *Gentry Leaders in Peace and War. The Gentry Governors of Devon in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Exeter 1997) pp.6-7; S.H. Rigby *English Society in the Later Middle Ages* (London 1995) pp.201-202; K. Wrightson 'The Social Order of Early Modern England: Three Approaches' in L. Bonfield (ed.) *The World We Have Gained. Histories of Population and Social Structure. Essays Presented to Peter Laslett on His Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford 1986) pp.177-202 for definitions of the gentry and nobility that have informed this thesis, together with statements about problems of definition

The first chapter reflects on the sources available for studying early-modern families and the challenges these present, while chapter two explores broad issues of family structures and marriage formation.⁷ More detailed attention is then paid to sex and gender and the process of preparing élite boys and girls for their adult roles in chapters three, four and five. Two styles of case-study approach are then pursued: chapter six draws on the manuscript letter collections of the Barrington and Aston families; chapter seven looks at three very different letters concerned with marriage formation. A broader view is taken in chapters eight, nine and ten of prescriptions on marriage and its formation, and attitudes, perceptions and experiences relating to love. While the case-study chapters focus on correspondence, others draw more heavily on diaries and autobiographical accounts and advice literature. Throughout, points concerning individuals' lives are illuminated, wherever possible, by manuscript sources.

Key arguments pursued concern the complexity of marriage formation, both in terms of decision-making and the array of family members involved as decision makers; the flexible exercise of patriarchy; the fluidity of relationships, roles and responsibilities, belying notions of discrete or autonomous nuclear families or household units and clearly-demarcated gender codes; the strength and importance of love within marriage formation and marriage itself; and the strong elision between printed prescription and rhetoric, personal views and apparent experience.

⁷ See R. O'Day *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900. England, France & the United States of America* (London 1994) Ch.1 for an exploration of recent historiography of family structures

Historical building blocks

The materials available for studying marriage formation, family relationships and gender roles in early-modern England are rich and varied, enabling us to glean much about past thinking, attitudes and reflections on experiences. Unsurprisingly, the sources also have limitations and present particular problems of inference and interpretation. But when used with caution, personal letters, diaries, meditations and autobiographies offer insights into the nature of relationships; the process of marriage formation; individuals' expectations, attitudes and emotions; and how individuals constructed themselves in writing. A large body of prescriptive literature, including published sermons and advice books, allows intellectual and religious thinking on marriage, family relationships and household management to be assessed, together with how advice was communicated to a wider, albeit delimited, audience. Household account books provide useful information on the financial and practical arrangements of families, while wills show how property and goods were passed through generations and, more subtly, throw light on family hierarchies and affective relationships. Poetry and plays give a valuable impression of prevalent trends in thinking on love, friendship, marriage and sexual politics, while fine art presents an interesting visual window on how wealthy families wished to be represented and how they might have served as icons for wider emulation.¹ This study draws primarily on the personal documentation of letters, diaries and autobiographical accounts and the abundance of advice literature, making more limited use of artistic material, wills and household account books.

The family has become an established and respectable focus for historical scholarship over recent decades. Historians' studies have tended to fall into several broad camps, shaped by the sources available to them, the methodologies they have deployed,

¹ M. Prior 'Conjugal Love Poetry and the Flight from Marriage: Poetry as a Source for the History of Women and the Family' in V. Fildes (ed.) *Women as Mothers in Pre-industrial England. Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London 1990) pp.179-203; D. Smith *Masks of Wedlock. Seventeenth-century Dutch Marriage Portraiture* (Essex 1982)

and the questions they have asked. Their approaches have centred on the principal factors thought to have defined family structures and relationships: inheritance practices, household size and composition, and the more intangible concepts of gender dynamics and affective relationships.² It would be overly simplistic to suggest that all, or indeed any, historians have adhered rigidly to one approach.³ Recent studies have rested on a dissatisfaction with monothematic readings of the family, considering families in isolation from wider social structures, and ignoring differing temporal and cultural perceptions of "family", "kinship" and "household".⁴ Increasingly, historians have stressed the multiple factors that have impacted on how the family has been viewed, organised and experienced, and raised the importance of not assuming that families have been the same - and seen in the same way - throughout time, within all societies, and at different social levels.

This thesis seeks to assert the merits of an approach that overtly considers issues of gender and the emotional dynamics of family life, while challenging the direct transposition of twentieth-century anthropological and sociological models to the early-modern period. Original proponents of the "sentiments" approach (labelled as such by Anderson) tended to assume that patriarchal authority defined family structures and relationships, sustaining such a theory largely by reference to the economic and legal structures that inhibited women's exercising power outside the family; an implicit supposition that family structures were always complete, thereby providing senior male figures to wield patriarchal power; and a rather simplistic reading of the marital conduct

² See M. Anderson *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914* (Basingstoke 1980); J. Goody *et al* (eds.) *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800* (Cambridge 1976); P. Laslett *The World We Have Lost - Further Explored* (London 1983); L. Stone *The Family, Sex and Marriage, 1500-1800* (London 1977)

³ See R.B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society. Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London 1981) Introduction p.2

⁴ H. Medick & D.W. Sabean (eds.) *Interest and Emotion: Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship* (Cambridge 1984) Ch.1; M. Mitterauer & R. Sieder *The European Family - Patriarchy to Partnership from the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. K. Oosterveen & M. Hertzinger (Oxford 1982) pp.xiv,5-8; J.L. Flandrin *Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality*, trans. R. Southern (Cambridge 1979) pp.4,9-11; J. Casey *The History of the Family* (Oxford 1989) Ch.1; R. O'Day *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900. England, France & the United States of America*. (London 1994) Ch.1

books of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁵ Although these treatises rehearsed scriptural arguments of female inferiority and drew heavily on the writings of St.Paul, they advocated a complex balance of power between husbands and wives and stressed the importance of affection both between spouses and between parents and children (see chapter eight). The reality for families, affected fundamentally by the dynamics of mortality rates, remarriage and the creation of complex networks of step-relationships, was one in which interactions, roles and responsibilities were blurred, both in terms of gender and generation and across the nuclear and extended family. We need, therefore, to apply the concept of patriarchy and models of family and household organisation carefully to gain a true feel for how things were.

Historians following an essentially demographic approach have understandably wished to substantiate theories and broad trends relating to families and household structures through exploring and presenting statistical evidence. However, the process of quantification can lead to a narrowing of perspective and work against evaluating underlying factors, change over time and variation across society. It can also hide the more subtle dynamics of family life.⁶ Much is to be gained from adopting a qualitative, more impressionistic approach. Considering a wide range of sources, while maintaining an awareness of their limitations and provenance, offers the opportunity to unearth the intricacies and diversity of family relationships. It enables us to appraise perceptions of family and kinship, experiences of - and attitudes towards - marriage formation and married life, power and affective relationships within families and between the sexes, and the strength of kinship ties. These factors do not lend themselves to quantification, but we are able to build up a picture of prevalent trends.⁷

⁵ See, for example, L. Stone *The Family, Sex and Marriage*; M. Slater *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verneys of Claydon House* (London 1984)

⁶ See W.O Aydelotte, A.G. Bogue & R.W. Fogel (eds.) *The Dimensions of Quantitative History in Research* (London 1972) Introduction, pp.8-11

⁷ See O'Day *Family and Family Relationships*. pp.25-28

Although personal records are valuable for exploring family and individual experience, their subjectivity demands caution. They offer insights into the lives and attitudes of just one individual, one family, or a limited range of relationships within one family or between a limited number of families. There are inherent problems in inferring wider beliefs, perceptions and experience, given the unique circumstances and psychological make-up that would have coloured both the lives recorded and the recording process itself. The impression offered by sources is also inevitably piecemeal. Many elements and stages of individuals' lives would not have been recorded in documents; their very absence makes it difficult to know what these areas might have been. A certain degree of scepticism has also to be exercised in considering whether individuals' confidings - whether to a real or an imagined reader - in personal documents truly reflected their emotions or feelings (whether intentionally or not), and the extent to which florid expressions of affection in letters and wills reflected adherence to semantic convention or cold opportunism. Equally, we cannot assume that strong expressions of sentiment were somehow false or a cynical manipulation of writers' relationship with those to whom they wrote or those whom they knew might be informed of, or affected by, their words. But we can perhaps safely assume that individuals were cautious, pragmatic and expedient, particularly in letter-writing, and complied with established protocols, whether consciously so or not.⁸ Plenty of exemplars existed from which writers could take a lead in writing to, and for, one another and for themselves, while retaining the scope for discretion and personal style.⁹

Prescriptive literature and artistic material require even greater care, given their respective tendency towards idealisation and alarmism, hyperbole and melodrama. The very attributes of early-modern writers whose poems and plays have survived and are still

⁸ See Gibson, J. 'Significant Space in Manuscript Letters' *The Seventeenth Century* XII (1997) pp.1-9

⁹ See, for example, Angel Day *The English Secreterie* (London 1586; Menston 1967); Thomas Blount *The Academy of Eloquence* (London 1654); G. Fry Murray *A Critical Edition of John Beadle's "A Journall or Diary of a Thankfull Christian"* (London 1656; New York 1996)

celebrated today can be construed as having set them apart from their less erudite and gifted peers. But artistic material helped others to express their feelings, giving it a currency that was crucial to its existence and contemporary success (see chapter six). In addition, we should not ignore poor, as well as good, artistic material.¹⁰ Although the intellectual content, powers of evocation and entertainment value of mediocre material might be less, it can be equally telling about past attitudes, beliefs and values. Leonard Wheatcroft's clumsily constructed verses are testament to this (see chapter ten).¹¹

The following two chapters form the 'building blocks' of the thesis. The first considers the sources available for studying the family and marriage, offering an evaluation of their merits and limitations. The second explores ways of studying the family and gender roles and highlights the importance of considering the incompleteness and complexity of families and households in relation to gender roles and relationships.

¹⁰ See Prior 'Conjugal Love and the Flight from Marriage' p.180

¹¹ G. Parfitt & R. Houlbrooke (eds.) *The Courtship Narrative of Leonard Wheatcroft, Derbyshire Yeoman* (Reading 1986)

Chapter one

Appraising the sources

Difficulties of access

Historians have lamented the problems that beset studying marriage, family relationships, men, women and children of the past. Stressing their inaccessibility, Ariès has described past experiences of love and sexuality as not a "private" but a "secret world".¹ Crawford has highlighted the unfortunate chain of circumstances surrounding women: they have produced fewer records than their male counterparts; documents they have produced have traditionally been deemed less important than those created by men and are therefore less likely to have survived; and the small amount of surviving material has added to a sense that women's history (and those areas of history that have tended to be deemed 'feminine' - a category into which the family has often been cast) is less significant than that of men.²

Of course, the relative absence of women from history is not simply the result of poor archival management of sources and much more fundamentally the result of women's past status and roles. Prior has observed that, of all women, wives are the hardest to discover because their identity has traditionally been absorbed into that of their husbands.³ Such a position was overtly promulgated in intellectual and legal thinking in early-modern England, reflected in T.E.'s now well-known statement, "A woman as soon as she is married is called 'covert'; in Latin, 'nupta', that is 'veiled'; as it were clouded and overshadowed".⁴ But there are dangers both in over-emphasising the limited nature of women's roles and the dearth of female-generated sources. Although T.E.'s statement

¹ P. Ariès 'Love in Married Life' in P. Ariès & A. Béjin (eds.) *Western Sexuality. Practice and Precepts in Past and Present Times*. trans. A. Forster (Oxford 1985) pp.136-37

² P. Crawford *Women and Religion 1500-1720* (London 1993) p.2

³ M. Prior 'Conjugal Love and the Flight from Marriage: Poetry as a Source for the History of Women and the Family' in V. Fildes (ed.) *Women as Mothers in Pre-industrial England. Essays in Memory of Dorothy MacLaren* (London 1990) p.179

⁴ T.E. 'Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights' (1632) quoted in E. Graham, H. Hinds, E. Hobbs & H. Wilcox (eds.) *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings of Seventeenth-century Women* (London 1989) p.7; see also William Sheppard *Grand Abridgement of the Common and Statute Law* (London 1675) p.241

reflected accepted rhetoric, wives acted on behalf of their families in ways that belied their legal status, while a sizeable number of women recorded their lives. This thesis explores the authority exercised by elite women, drawing heavily on their writings to do so.

Some historians have contended that the family and domestic dimensions of men's lives are just as, if not more, difficult to capture than those of women. Work in this area is compounded by the relative novelty for historians to explore the more personal aspects of men's lives and entrenched notions that it was the public arena that was all-important to men. However, there is increasing recognition of the importance of looking at other aspects of men's lives.⁵ Moreover, we can develop a strong impression of the family's centrality to gentlemen's existence and identity (see chapter three).

Other scholars have claimed that children present the severest difficulties. Collinson has suggested they "are in danger of being squeezed out of the story", since they are "neither seen nor heard", while Earle has declared, "silence surrounds every aspect of childhood".⁶ But significant insights can be gained, not least through the growth of autobiographical writing during the early-modern period.⁷ Although such material presents particular problems of accuracy and interpretation, how an individual constructed his or her life in writing - including its most formative stages - is telling about cultural mores, contemporary thinking and the relationship between personal experience and self-representation. In particular, individuals' representation of themselves as children gives a

⁵ See P. Roberts 'Fatherhood in Eighteenth-century Holland: The Ven der Muelen Brothers' *Journal of Family History* 12 (1996) p.218; S.D. Amussen "The part of a Christian man": the cultural politics of manhood in early modern England' in S.D. Amussen & M.A. Kishlansky (eds.) *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester 1995) p.214; J. Tosh 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain' *History Workshop Journal* 38 (1994) pp.179-80; T. Fenster in C.A. Lees (ed.) *Medieval Masculinities - Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis 1994) Preface

⁶ P. Collinson *The Birth-pangs of Protestant England. Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London 1988) p.78; P. Earle *The Making of the English Middle Class* (London 1989) p.234; see also H. Cunningham *Children & Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London 1995) pp.1-3

⁷ G. Parfitt & R. Houlbrooke *The Courtship Narrative of Leonard Wheatcroft, Derbyshire Yeoman*. (Reading 1986) p.14

strong impression of attitudes towards childhood, preparations for adulthood and emotional and moral maturation (see chapter five).

So the family lives of individuals of both sexes and at different stages of their life-cycle, together with how individuals interacted with one another in and across domestic settings, are seen as difficult historical seas to chart. But these difficulties are not insurmountable, at least for the gentry and nobility of early-modern England. Diverse sources are available for considering past behaviour, attitudes, ideals and relationships within, and about, families. It was a fertile time for prescriptive literature, while an increasing number of literate individuals kept diaries and other types of avowedly autobiographical records, many encouraged by puritan treatises that promoted diary-keeping for spiritual development.⁸

Prolific prescription

Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England witnessed a sharp rise in the publication of didactic literature. Treatises told those who could read how they should deport themselves, live their lives, organise their families and households, and conduct their relationships with one another (including through writing).⁹ A variety of factors is likely to have contributed to such an increase in moralistic and stylistic outpourings. Puritanism arguably formed a new evangelical force. Although the advice of puritan ministers and their followers was not new, it reinforced established teachings with a new tenacity and vigour (see chapter eight). Writers seem to have felt compelled to publish not just because of a sense of religious crusade, but by more earthbound fears that families and

⁸ M. Mascuch *Origins of the Individualist Self. Autobiography and Self-identity in England, 1591-1791* (Oxford 1997) pp.23,56,83-86; G. Fry Murray *A Critical Edition of John Beadle's "A Journall or Diary of a Thankfull Christian"* (London 1656; New York 1996); R. Houlbrooke (ed.) *English Family Life, 1576-1716: An Anthology from Diaries* (Oxford 1988) pp.3,7; A. Macfarlane *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge 1970) pp.6-7; E.L. Eisenstein *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change - Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*. Vol.1 (Cambridge 1979) pp.133-135

⁹ See R.V. Schnucker 'Puritan Attitudes Towards Childhood Discipline, 1560-1634' in Fildes *Women as Mothers*. pp.108-109; J. Robertson *The Art of Letter Writing. An Essay on the Handbooks Published in England During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London 1942)

individuals were not conducting themselves in ways conducive to social order. That families were seen as the bedrock of society heightened the need to attend to their well-being (see chapter two). A combination of religious, moral and secular factors seems therefore to have inspired puritan writers, and others, to publish with a vengeance.¹⁰ For some, patriotism also played a part; several authors of prescriptions for young gentlemen claimed to have been inspired by the opprobrious nature of English youth, while advisers on commerce were keen for the English to emulate the mercantile success of the Dutch by changing how they organised their family life and approached education (see chapter five).¹¹

But the increase in published literature cannot simply be seen as the product of more prolific or driven writers. It reflected greater opportunities from the late fifteenth century to produce books, the development of publishing as a commercial enterprise, and a new pressure on the male social elite to contribute to public debate.¹² The publication of numerous treatises debating the nature of women cannot be read just as a sudden rise in misogyny and respective keenness on the part of some men, and some women, to defend the female sex.¹³ Other reasons were that the material could be printed and, most importantly, that it sold. Publishing sermons - material that in previous times would have been lost in the ether (although retained in the minds of congregants, it was obviously

¹⁰ See D. Underdown *Revel, Riot and Rebellion. Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford 1987) pp.42-43 for statements about the intermingling of religious, moral and pragmatic factors in puritan thought and action

¹¹ L.V. Ryan (ed.) *Roger Ascham. The Schoolmaster* (London 1570; Ithaca 1967); Thomas Powell *The Art of Thriving. Or, The plaine path-way to preferment* (London 1635); Josiah Child *Brief Observations Concerning Trade and Interest of Money* (London 1688)

¹² R.A. Houston *Literacy in Early Modern Europe. Culture and Education 1500-1800* (London 1988) pp.156-158; see also C. Durston & J. Eales 'Introduction: The Puritan Ethos, 1560-1700' in Durston & Eales (eds.) *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (London 1996) p.28; Eisenstein *The Printing Press*. Vol.1 pp.133-34, 229-32; A.B. Ferguson *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham, New Carolina 1965) pp.133,147; L. Davis (ed.) *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance. An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents* (New York 1998) p.309 for the growth in the publication of ballad literature; C.M. Jagodzinski *Privacy and Print. Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-century England* (Charlottesville 1999) pp.2-8

¹³ See S. Shepherd (ed.) *The Women's Sharp Revenge. Five Women's Pamphlets of the Renaissance* (London 1985) Introduction; R. Masek, 'Women in an Age of Transition: 1485-1714' in B. Kanner (ed.) *The Women of England from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present* (London 1980) pp.146-52

hoped) - meant their messages could be disseminated widely and preserved for posterity, as well as reflecting puritanism's stress on preaching, reading and discipline.¹⁴ It also enabled their purveyors to respond to criticism. William Gouge used the preface to *Of Domesticall Duties* to qualify statements he had made to his Blackfriars congregation and thereby rebut his female detractors.¹⁵ Printing therefore provided a valuable evangelical tool, an opportunity to question and reinforce the sexual hierarchy, scope for extended debate on topical issues, and a channel for reiterating moral and intellectual arguments.

It is too simplistic to distinguish firmly between prescriptive literature produced explicitly for publication and that written for private circulation or a single, named reader. Surviving 'advice to son' literature includes texts clearly written for a wider audience than just the son to whom they were dedicated, as well as treatises that were intended initially as private advice for a named individual but with the expectation they would then be used within his family over successive generations. Individuals' intentions were sometimes ambiguous. While purporting to write for a select audience, some had covert hopes for a wider readership. This was the case particularly for some women, for whom publication was seen to challenge the feminine virtues of silence and chasteness (see chapter four). But not all men intended, or asserted, the aim of getting into print either.¹⁶ Some authors wanted their works to remain private but their relatives or friends had other plans: Elizabeth Jocelin's husband arranged for her advice to her unborn child to be published after she had died, while the devotional writings of Elizabeth Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater were collected and transcribed in 1663, the year of her death.¹⁷ (Although they remained in manuscript, they were made accessible to a wider, albeit select,

¹⁴ C. Hill *The Century of Revolution 1603-1714* 2nd edn (Wokingham 1980) p.69; see R.V. Lucas 'Puritan Preaching and the Politics of the Family' in A.M. Haselkorn & B.S. Travitsky (eds.) *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print. Counterbalancing the Canon* (Amherst 1990) pp.226-27 on the effectiveness of sermons as a form of "thought-control and opinion-forming" and the added value of printing them

¹⁵ William Gouge *Of Domesticall Duties* (London 1622; Amsterdam 1976) Preface [p.3b]

¹⁶ See for example, Henry Peacham *The Compleat Gentleman, Fashioning Him Absolute in the Most Necessary & Commendable Qualities Concerning Minde or Bodie that may be Required in a Noble Gentleman* (London 1622; Amsterdam 1968)

¹⁷ Elizabeth Jocelin *The Mothers Legacie, to her unborne Childe* (London 1624); Elizabeth Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater *Devotional Pieces by Elizabeth, Countess of Bridgewater* BL Egerton MS 607

audience.) Material could be printed for negative reasons. Colonel Marten's letters to his mistress and the mother of his children were published by a political enemy as a shaming tactic and to make public his radicalism.¹⁸

The relationship between private writings and public audience intrigued some of the period. Nicholas Breton began the trend for publishing letter collections with his *A Poste with a Packet of Madde Letters* in 1602.¹⁹ Some of the intimate letters of James Howell and Margaret Cavendish are likely to have been transcripts of 'authentic' missives, while others were constructed expressly for entertainment.²⁰ Cavendish's *Sociable Letters* were given meaning by their implied reader of an intimate friend, affording her the opportunity and excuse to adopt a tone, and to address subject matter, that would have been more difficult to justify had she written the material overtly for a general audience (see chapter seven).²¹ It is clear that writers deployed language in a sophisticated manner and used genre in creative ways.

Personal memoirs

Perhaps personal memoirs' greatest value is the glimpses they offer into the more intimate aspects of individuals' lives. Indeed, it is their very subjectivity that makes them such a rich seam for exploring past mental worlds and personal relationships. The degree to which diaries and autobiographies present a balanced, full or honest picture of their authors' inner and outer lives is uncertain, of course.²² Many aspects of a writer's experiences, both material and emotional, might have been omitted, possibly intentionally. Earle has suggested that early-modern writers would not have recorded when they beat their children; whether he thinks this was because they felt guilty about their actions,

¹⁸ E. Gayton (ed.) *Colonel Marten's Familiar Letters to his Lady of Delight* (London 1662)

¹⁹ See Robertson *The Art of Letter Writing*. pp.25-26

²⁰ James Howell *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae: Familiar Letters Domesticall and Foreign* (London 1754); Margaret Cavendish *Sociable Letters* (London 1664); J. Fitzmaurice (ed.) *Margaret Cavendish 'Sociable Letters'* (New York & London 1997) p.xii; see Chapter seven

²¹ See M. Montgomery, A. Durant et. al. *Ways of Reading - Advanced Reading Skills for Students of English Literature* (London 1992) pp.236-37

²² See S.H. Mendelson 'Stuart Women's Diaries and Occasional Memoirs' in M. Prior (ed.) *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* (London 1985) p.182

because it was such a routine occurrence as not to warrant recording, or because recording such activity was simply seen as inappropriate is not clear. However, it would be rash to infer from scant references that it rarely occurred.²³ Equally, we should not assume a cold or harsh approach to childrearing (see chapter five).

While most diarists remained silent on their conjugal relations, they were not entirely demure.²⁴ Some writers made implicit reference. Others recorded more overtly their happy, or unhappy, love lives, mentioning, for example, when marital conflict led them to sleep apart temporarily from their spouse (a practice that the conduct book writers advised against; see chapter eight).²⁵ Reference can also be found to conjugal relations being maintained when other aspects of a relationship had broken down. Lady Margaret Cuninghame chronicled the disastrous events of her first marriage to Sir James Hamilton, including his unwanted attentions shortly after the birth of their son.²⁶ Not only was she repulsed by him, his visits seem to have broken accepted conventions concerning visits during a woman's lying-in after birth.²⁷

How writers consciously or unconsciously edited their personal memoirs might have been informed by received wisdom or a more individual protocol. Potentially, diaries or letters formed a record of exceptional incidences or events, perhaps recounting family life only when relations broke down, not when they were amicable or simply on an even keel. Similarly, they might have formed an account of specific types of events or facets of an individual's life (for example, his or her religious practices and experiences) or only selected aspects. However, what was deemed exceptional, and what individuals chose to

²³ Earle *Making of the English Middle Class*. p.231

²⁴ See L.A. Pollock 'Embarking on a rough passage: the experience of pregnancy in early-modern society' in Fildes *Women as Mothers*. pp.40-42

²⁵ See Houlbrooke *English Family Life*. p.53; Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. p.229

²⁶ *A pairt of the life of Lad y Margaret Cuninghame, Daughter of the Earl of Glencairn, that she had with her first husband, the Master of Everdale* (Edinburgh 1827) pp.10-11

²⁷ See A. Wilson 'The Ceremony of Childbirth and its Interpretation' in Fildes *Women as Mothers*. pp.77-78

record is in itself interesting, indicating possible mismatches between individuals' expectations and their actual experience (as was the case for Lady Margaret Cuninghame) and illustrating the perceived highs and lows of family life.²⁸

Generally, diaries provide a more immediate account of events and experiences of an individual's life than autobiographies, since they gave writers less scope for hindsight or constructing their identity through a carefully crafted narrative. This is not to say, however, that diaries formed neutral, objective or non-selective accounts, or immediate, day-by-day accounts of their authors' lives. Just as questions arise about the original and declared intentions of some writers of advice literature, similar issues arise about whether individual diaries constituted private documents or whether they were produced to be read by others. Houlbrooke has expressed unease about drawing a rigid distinction between private diaries and autobiographical works written with an audience clearly in mind, having found autobiographies that essentially formed transcriptions of diary entries.²⁹ Equally, some diaries were not composed as piecemeal, timebound entries, but show a perspective that simply could not have been enjoyed at the supposed time of writing. Isaac Archer's diary covers the whole of his life (1641-1700), charting his evolution from a sinful child to a virtuous adult (and thereby throwing intriguing light on how he perceived his childhood), although he did not begin to write it until 1655.³⁰

Nonetheless, individuals were generally selective about what they wrote and how they shaped their accounts according to the genre in which they chose to work. This becomes particularly apparent when different types of documents have survived by the same author. The Countess of Warwick presented two very different pictures of her

²⁸ See Haliwell, J.O. (ed.) *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee, and the Catalogue of his Library Manuscripts, from the original manuscripts* Camden Society Vol.19 (London 1842) passim for his meticulous recording of relatively minor family events

²⁹ R. Houlbrooke *English Family Life*. p.4

³⁰ M. Storey (ed.) *Two East Anglian Diaries 1641-1729. Isaac Archer and William Coe* Suffolk Records Society Vol.XXXVI (Bury St.Edmunds 1994) p.5; see also A. Macfarlane (ed.) *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (Oxford 1976)

marriage: in the more public account of her autobiography, she had no complaints about her husband, giving a rosy picture of their marriage; in her private meditations, however, she reflected on her husband's shortcomings, giving the impression that she was far from satisfied with wedlock.³¹ Authors' selectivity could be born of more pragmatic considerations, while issues of self-presentation played their part.³² That individuals engaged in selection, construction and reconstruction does not undermine the value of their personal memoirs as historical sources. How they narrated their lives is telling about contemporary mores and conformity to these, while reinforcing that whether individuals wrote for a public or private audience was blurred.³³

With some exceptions and qualifications, the writers of personal memoirs loosely adhered to their chosen genre.³⁴ Early-modern diarists generally kept regularly maintained documents comprising dated entries. Autobiographical accounts were essentially one-off compositions, written with more expansive reflection and a keener intention that they should be read by others. Individuals appeared to have had a strong sense of what was appropriate and inappropriate to include in a particular written account, explicable in part by how, and by whom, they anticipated their words would be read. Moreover, a general sense is gained of writers' particular purpose. A diary was written as a personal text, perhaps for 'self-improvement'; an autobiographical account was written more with a sense that it would be useful and valuable to others, however modestly this was expressed. Such 'others' could form a close circle of family members and friends or a wider, potentially infinite (both in time and numbers), literate audience.

³¹ T. Crofton Croker (ed.) *Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick* (London 1848); *Occasional Meditations by Lady Warwick, 1663-1677* BL Add.MS. 27,358 passim; see also E. Graham 'Women's Writing and the Self' in H. Wilcox (ed.) *Women and Literature in Britain 1500-1770* (Cambridge 1996) p.211 on Alice Thornton's production of three manuscript versions of her life, composited in the Surtees Society's edition of 1873

³² See J.D. Marshall (ed.) *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752* (Manchester 1967) p.18; L. Pollock *With Faith and Physic. The life of a Tudor Gentlewoman. Lady Grace Mildmay 1552-1620* (London 1993) p.19

³³ See K. Walker *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York 1996) pp.26-27

³⁴ See B.S. Travitsky "'His wife's prayers and meditations" MS Egerton 607' in Haselkorn & Travitsky *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*. p.246 on the difficulties of defining the Countess of Bridgewater's work in terms of genre

Why some individuals produced personal memoirs and why they did so at particular times are difficult questions to answer.³⁵ Reasons might have included the wish simply to note events, possibly for future amusement or edification; as a basis for personal reflection or reform; or as a release from tension. Houlbrooke's suggestion that a sense of physical or psychological separation could form a strong motivation is well supported by Lady Ann Clifford, whose diary revealed her unhappy marriage and her frustration with her isolated life compared with that of her husband.³⁶ Isaac Archer explained that, in keeping a diary, he had followed his father's advice that he should duplicate the record of his "every sin and debt" kept in heaven.³⁷ Women's personal accounts give valuable insights into some of the corporeal and material aspects of their writers' lives, particularly details of childbirth and indications of what seem to have been a quite overtly perceived female life-cycle; in Elizabeth Delaval's words, the transition from the "springtime of my life" to "the summer of it".³⁸ Some diaries show that individuals, both men and women, questioned the accepted progression of life changes and reflected on the significance of these. Alice Thornton was ambivalent about whether she was ready to marry given her happiness with being single, while Gervase Holles contemplated the profound impact of marriage and fatherhood on his outlook, priorities and demeanour (see chapters three and four).³⁹

Individuals' reasons for writing explicitly for an audience are easier to determine than their motives for diary-keeping. Whether male or female, writers were usually keen to

³⁵ See Houlbrooke *English Family Life* pp.5,6; A. Macfarlane *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*. p.7

³⁶ D.J.H. Clifford (ed.) *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford* (Gloucestershire 1990); see Houlbrooke *English Family Life*. p.8; K. Hodgkin 'The Diary of Lady Anne Clifford: A Study of Class and Gender in the Seventeenth Century' *History Workshop* 19 (1985) p.151; see Philip Stubbes 'A Christian Glasse, for Christian Women' (1591) in S. Trill, K., Chedgzoy & M. Osborne, (eds.) *Lay by Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen. Women Writing in England, 1500-1700* (London 1997) p.59 for Stubbes' praise for his wife's willingness to remain alone during his absences as evidence of her virtue

³⁷ Storey *Two East Anglian Diaries*. pp.43-44; see also Mascuch *Origins of the Individualist Self*. p.88

³⁸ 'Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval' in C.F. Otten (ed.) *English Women's Voices, 1540-1700*. (Miami 1992) p.335; Mendelson 'Stuart Women's Diaries' pp.189,191

³⁹ Jackson *Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton*. pp.75,76; Wood *Memorials of the Holles Family*. p.230

justify their launch into manuscript or print. Sir John Bramston explained his autobiography provided a record "what I have done, and how I have spent ... my time" so that future generations of his family might "know something of my father, my selfe, besides our name in the pedigree". Elizabeth Jocelin, Gervase Holles and Henry Newcome wrote for their respective children.⁴⁰

Letter-writing

Correspondence presents fewer, or at least different, problems for the historian than diaries, autobiographies and meditations. Although still dependent on reasonable levels of literacy, letter-writing was a less rarefied and indulgent activity. It formed a basic method of communication, rather than an exercise in contemplation, self-discipline or purposeful promotion of the self or one's family, although these could clearly form peripheral benefits. Letters have the added value of having played an active part of individuals' relationships with one another and, as Walker has remarked, having been "poised between private and public realms".⁴¹ They were not just a paper representation or record of past experiences, attitudes and lives. Thomas Blount reflected, "Letters are the very thoughts of the heart, but once removed ... [the] weak reflections of stronger affections". As such, they formed "the sweet communication of fancy, which have been always esteemed the best fuel of affection, and the very marrow of friendship".⁴² They were also generally about more practical aspects of life, rather than comprising the introspective, and sometimes esoteric, elements of autobiographical accounts, although examples can be found of letters written purely to express affection and Blount produced model letters for this purpose (see chapter ten).⁴³ Letters were not usually tainted with a conscious attempt to record life events or to

⁴⁰ P. Braybooke (ed.) *The Autobiography of Sir John Bramston K.B. of Skreens, in the Hundred of Chelmsford* (London 1845) p.4; Jocelin *Mothers Legacie*; A.C. Wood (ed.) *Memorials of the Holles Family, 1493-1656* Camden Third Series Vol.IV (London 1937); J.H. Turner (ed.) *The Rev. Oliver Heywood, BA, 1630-1702. His Autobiography, Diaries, Anecdote and Event Books*. 4 Vols. (Brighouse 1882-1885); see Mascuch *Origins of the Individualist Self*. p.88

⁴¹ K. Walker *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York 1996) p.27

⁴² Thomas Blount *The Academy of Eloquence* (London 1654; Menston 1971) p.75

⁴³ Ibid. pp.149-232 passim

leave an account for posterity, although some correspondents did expect or want their missives to edify (see chapter seven). Letters therefore offer a more direct insight into how individuals and families conducted their lives, how individuals related to one another and how they managed, and responded to, specific situations.

Letters written while marriages were being forged are particularly interesting because they formed an active ingredient in the complex process of negotiation and decision-making. At the same time, we need to be mindful that, in writing to one another, individuals carefully framed themselves and their motives and attitudes.⁴⁴ Indeed, in letters concerning marriage formation, too much was at stake for total openness and honesty. Roger Williams' letter to Lady Joan Barrington, considered in chapter seven, provides a humorous example of the combination of self-assertion and deference demanded in attempting to broker a marriage from a position of subordination.⁴⁵

Even substantial collections of correspondence that have survived from families such as the Barringtons and Astons cannot provide a complete or necessarily accurate insight into their authors' lives (see chapter six). Family members and friends were only likely to have written to one another at times when they were physically distanced and at times of particular need. Placing too great an emphasis on relationships maintained through letters can therefore obscure the importance and depth of relationships between relatives resident in the same household (just as a focus on household composition can ignore the importance of family relationships that existed beyond this physical institution; see chapter two). Similarly, the level of correspondence between individuals is likely to have been higher at atypical times, while allowance has also to be made for some individuals having had a greater propensity to write letters and attaching a greater significance to dispatching and receiving correspondence than others.⁴⁶ Some individuals

44 See Walker *Women Writers*. p.27

45 Roger Williams letter to Lady Joan Barrington [April? 1629] BL Egerton Mss.2643, f.1

46 See J. Donne *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour: Written by John Donne, Sometime Dean of St.*

would have been more inclined to write - and more adept at writing - expressions of affection than their peers. Thus, cold relationships cannot automatically be inferred from the absence of declarations of love. Nevertheless, letter-writing was important for maintaining, and strengthening relationships during periods of separation. That gentle and noble friendship and kinship at least sometimes conferred expectations to maintain contact through letter-writing is shown by Lady Anne Southwell's ironic elegy 'to the Countesse of London Derrye. supposeinge hir to be dead by hir longe silence'.⁴⁷

As well as providing a sporadic chronicle of correspondents' relationships, experiences and attitudes, correspondence contains layers of implicit understandings, unspoken assumptions and varying psychological, linguistic and factual shorthand, discrete to correspondents' relationship, family, social network, social status, religion, etcetera.⁴⁸ Writers might not always have given honest accounts of their attitudes, motivations or feelings, either consciously or unconsciously; they could have misrepresented the views of others (either deliberately or innocently); and their attitudes and perspective on their experiences and relationships might have changed over time. John Donne, for example, ranged from eulogising about passionate love in his songs and sonnets and making a reckless love match with his master's niece to reflecting, as a widower considering taking holy orders, on his relief "from the Egypt of lust". As dean of St.Paul's, he expressed a strong scepticism about marriage in wedding sermons.⁴⁹

Paul's London (London, 1651) pp.24-25,121; James Howell *Epistolae Ho-Elinae: Familiar Letters Domestic and Foreign; Divided into Four Books: Partly Historical, Political, Philosophical Upon Emergent Occasions*. 11th edn (London 1754) pp.13-14,165,179-80,444

⁴⁷ J. Klene (ed.) *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book. Folger Ms. V.b.198*. Renaissance English Text Society. Vol.XX (Arizona 1997) pp.24-27

⁴⁸ See B. Bernstein 'Class, Codes and Control' Vol.1 *Theoretical Studies towards a Sociology of Language* (London 1971) pp.176-77

⁴⁹ A.J. Smith (ed.) *John Donne: The Complete English Poems* (London, 1971); E. Gosse *The Life and Letters of John Donne* Vol.1 (London 1899) pp.95-121; E.M. Simpson *Essays in Divinity by John Donne* (Oxford 1952) p.75; N. Rhodes *John Donne: Selected Prose* (London 1987) pp.170ff,268ff; Rose *The Expense of Spirit*. pp.98-99,103,105

Representation and surviving material

It is difficult to know whether those who kept a diary or wrote an autobiography were representative of their contemporaries, or whether surviving texts are representative of those now lost.⁵⁰ Parfitt and Houlbrooke have claimed Leonard Wheatcroft was "unique" in providing such a florid and melodramatic description of his protracted courtship and the readiness with which he took to verse. However, they do not suggest that his attitudes and beliefs were atypical.⁵¹ Indeed, his narrative betrays characteristics that were very much of his social status (see chapter ten).⁵² That individuals seem to have abided by particular conventions and constructed their life narratives in ways they thought would be acceptable suggests they were not so different from their peers who did not write or whose memoirs have not survived.

But extant personal documents are inevitably biased in several ways: they were generally written by those of the upper and middling ranks; diaries, at least, tended to be written by those who were deeply religious; and they were written largely, but certainly not exclusively, by men.⁵³ Despite their relative exclusivity, women who wrote were not a homogenous group and did not depict a common female experience. However, Graham *et al* have noted a trend of seventeenth-century female authors seeking to assert a 'truth' and establish an honest reputation.⁵⁴ We need to be sensitive to why this was so. An emphasis

⁵⁰ See Marshall *Autobiography of William Stout*. [p.1] for comments on how unusual it was for a tradesman or merchant to have kept an autobiography and for this to have survived; see also Houlbrooke *English Family Life*. pp.7,12; Macfarlane *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*. p.8; Mendelson *Stuart Women's Diaries*. pp.184-85

⁵¹ Parfitt & Houlbrooke *Courtship Narrative of Leonard Wheatcroft*. p.14

⁵² See, for example, W.L. Sasche (ed.) *The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire, 1663-1674* (London 1938)

⁵³ B. Reay (ed.) *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-century England* (London 1988) p.4; D. Cressy *Literacy and the Sociology of Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge 1980) p.72; Sharpe *Early Modern England* pp.269-70; M. Spufford 'First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experience of the Humblest Seventeenth-century Spiritual Autobiographers' *Social History* 4 (1979) p.409; M. Spufford *Small Books and Pleasant Histories. Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge 1985) pp.21,31-5; R. Thompson *Women in Stuart England and America. A Comparative Study* (Cambridge 1985) pp.34-5

⁵⁴ Graham *et al*. *Her Own Life*. pp.23,24,25; see also Houlbrooke *English Family Life*. p.13

in women's published writing on excusing the very act in which they were engaged and a keenness on their part to be seen as honest rapporters of their lives, cannot simply be taken at face value. Each formed a useful tactic and a pragmatic adherence to genre. For women to get into print, they had to lessen the sting of their actions (see chapter four).

The memoirs of the Countess of Warwick, Lucy Hutchinson and Ann Fanshawe chart an essentially common narrative; evolution from a misspent girlhood - manifested in idle thoughts of love, fuelled by reading unsuitable literature, and 'gadding about' - to a virtuous adulthood, expressed in religious observance and attention to family duty.⁵⁵ Such a process of female maturation was precipitated either by marriage or taking on household responsibilities following an elder female relative's death. Ann Fanshawe reflected that, in her girlhood, she had been "wild to that degree that the hours of my beloved recreation took up too much of my time ... in fine I was that which we graver people call a hoyter girl". When her mother died (in 1640, when Ann was fifteen), she had "flung away those little childnesses that had formerly possessed me, and by my father's command took upon me the charge of his house and family".⁵⁶ Interestingly, such a narrative of self-development was also constructed by Isaac Archer.⁵⁷ How far such a seemingly stylised description of individuals' life-cycle formed a frank account of their actual experience, responses to circumstances and actions, and how much it conformed with ideas on individuals' moral and religious development is difficult to discern. However, we can infer that strong cultural ideologies affected how authors depicted themselves and engaged in self-creation.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Crofton Croker *Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick; Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, Governor of Nottingham Castle and Town ... written by his widow Lucy* (London 1806); Ann Fanshawe *Memoirs* (1676) [p. 110] quoted in N.H. Keeble (ed.) *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman. A Reader* (London 1994) p. 180

⁵⁶ Ann Fanshawe *Memoirs*. p. 180

⁵⁷ Storey *Two East Anglian Diaries*. pp. 41-185

⁵⁸ See S. Greenblatt *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago 1980)

Documents published, either during or after the writer's life, obviously stood a much greater chance of surviving than those left in manuscript. Moreover, the subject matter of works had an impact on what was published. Non-devotional writing by women was more likely to have been lost through seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century editors' preference for works that illustrated female piety.⁵⁹ Material by women that contained overt excuses for its existence also stood a better chance of being deemed worthy of presentation than that which was less apologetic. Margaret Cavendish's reflections on the reception of her 'unfemale' writings give some idea of how less zealous and less protected women writers might have fared (see chapter four).⁶⁰

The dynamics between prescription and personal experience

It can neither be assumed that prescriptive literature and individuals' ideas, views and actions were firmly distinct from one another, nor that they were umbilically linked. There *should* have been a two-way exchange between the advice and the advised: authors' prescriptions are likely to have been informed by the culture in which they lived and the thinking to which they were exposed; in turn, they are likely to have informed and contributed - in however small a way - to contemporary culture and thinking. There were strong similarities between the prescriptions of published literature and tenets of advice offered by individuals to their families in treatises and correspondence (see chapter eight).⁶¹ However, the relationship between even homespun advice and actual belief and action is elusive.

Meckling's scepticism about the relationship of advice manuals on twentieth-century childrearing in America to reality seems applicable to prescriptive material from any age and on any topic.⁶² Aside from the difficulty of judging whether guidance

⁵⁹ See Mendelson 'Stuart Women's Diaries' p.188

⁶⁰ C.H. Firth (ed.) *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. The Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle, to which is added the true relation of my birth, breeding, and life* (London 1886) pp.xlviii, lvii

⁶¹ See A. Bryson *From Courtesy to Civility. Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford 1998) p.279

⁶² J. Meckling 'Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers' *Journal of Social History* 19 (1975) pp.44-

mirrored practice or *vice versa*, there is the problem of gaining a firm understanding of the cultural context from which such material derived and the degree to which it reflected cultural values current at the time of its production.⁶³ Individuals' absorption, assimilation and application of advice to which they were exposed is also hard to establish. Davies has presented the puritan marital guidance as having described an established "bourgeois ideal".⁶⁴ But even if puritan ideas were not new, they did not necessarily reflect existing practice and attitudes. Differences in prescribed gender roles in different sorts of literature show the multifarious nature of advice, while the elision in the actual activity of the sexes indicates the lack of an absolute match between theory and practice.⁶⁵

There is a danger in inferring a natural correlation between advice and evident behaviour or attitudes and assuming that contemporary advice had a profound effect on beliefs and action.⁶⁶ For Fletcher, "The necessary link between ideology and experience or practice is prescription", while Cunningham has conjectured that the "sheer quantity" of early-modern advisory material on children "makes it implausible" that it could have "existed purely in the realm of ideals", although he acknowledges the difficulty of judging how far children's lives conformed to such models.⁶⁷ These seem overly optimistic readings of the historian's task. Although reassuring to suppose a direct relationship between established belief, prescription and personal attitudes, we can never have this guarantee.⁶⁸ Notions of a dominant view on masculinity, for example, have to be seen in the context of multiple experiences and perceptions of being a man, some of which would

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63 See also Schnucker 'Puritan Attitudes Towards Childhood Discipline' pp.112-113

64 K.M. Davies 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage' in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London 1981) pp.66-67; see also Collinson *Birth Pangs of Protestant England*. pp.60-61

65 See section on 'Sex and gender within families', pp.56-119

66 See Schnucker 'Puritan Attitudes Towards Childhood Discipline'. p.112; Bryson *From Courtesy to Civility*. p.278

67 A. Fletcher *Sex, Gender and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (London 1995) p.98; Cunningham *Children and Childhood*. p.51

68 See O'Day *Family and Family Relationships*. p.63

have been in conflict with the pre-eminent one (see chapter three).⁶⁹ Indeed, that so much advisory material was published in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is perhaps a sign that what was espoused bore little relation to practice.⁷⁰ Puritan ministers' prolific decrees on marriage and family life should alert us to the possibility that few in society actually adhered to the tenets of their advice. Indeed, didacticism perhaps was the manifestation of a sense that the sanctity of marriage, the orderliness of families and decorous personal behaviour were under threat.⁷¹ To consider only respectable and moralistic material can miss the messages of more bawdy relics and distort the dynamic relationship between advice and practice. Equally, an exclusive examination of colloquial literature and legal records, or too cynical reading of moralising material, can lead to too strong an inference of a degenerate society or too strong a presumption of differences in terms of social status.⁷²

There is also a danger of inferring false causal relationships between prescription and behaviour. Walker has claimed that Lady Jane Cornwallis and Lady Brilliana Harley constructed themselves as women according to the advice of the marital conduct books, on the grounds that Lady Jane presented herself passively in negotiations to marry Nathaniel Bacon and Lady Brilliana expressed affection for her husband and son.⁷³ Such an interpretation seems rash, not least because Lady Jane approached her second marriage from a position of substantial economic advantage and appeared far from passive in ensuring a good settlement for herself (see chapter four).⁷⁴ Moreover, to read what appear

⁶⁹ See L. Roper *The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford 1989) pp.31-32,86; M. Weisner 'Wandervogels and Women: Journeyman's concepts of Masculinity in Early Modern Germany' *Journal of Social History* 24 (1991) pp.767-782; E.A. Foyster *Manhood in Early Modern England. Honour, Sex and Marriage*. (London 1999) pp.4-5,210-11

⁷⁰ See M.R. Hunt *The Middling Sort. Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (London 1996) pp.69,72,217; Foyster *Manhood in Early Modern England*. p.2

⁷¹ See J. Hale *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London 1993) pp.430,432-33,438-39

⁷² See R. Adair *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester 1996) pp.131-32

⁷³ Walker *Women Writers of the English Renaissance*. pp.31 & 33

⁷⁴ See M. George *Women in the First Capitalist Society. Experiences in Seventeenth-century England* (Brighton 1988) pp.193-202 for a very different reading of Lady Brilliana Harley's relationship with her son Ned.

genuine expressions of wifely and motherly love as signals of learning from manuals seems both to distrust individuals' capacity for genuine affection to an unhelpful degree and to imbue prescription with an implausible power over emotion.⁷⁵

Concluding remarks

Compiling an impression of early-modern thinking, experience and attitudes relating to marriage and the family is far from straightforward. Collinson has disdained the "normal procedure for historians ... [either] to use the [puritan] conduct books as a general commentary on social practice and as a control over the more selective evidence", such as letters, diaries and autobiographies, or "to use these more personal documents to test the validity of the conduct books".⁷⁶ This thesis tries to avoid both approaches, while still tackling the relationship between prescription, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions and attempting to discover links between dominant thinking and individual action. Case studies have a strong value in this respect, although there is a danger in using evidence gleaned to support broad hypotheses too glibly (see chapters six and seven).⁷⁷ Families were the product of unique combinations of circumstances and lineage to which their members would have responded singularly. Tentative conclusions are therefore required. This is not to deny the value of detailed analyses of individual families, whose surviving papers provide insights into the attitudes, relationships and experiences of family life. But their limitations need to be made explicit; their complexity, ambiguity, variety and contradiction welcomed; and their impressions placed in the wider context of findings.

⁷⁵ R. Griffin, Lord Braybrooke (ed.) *The Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis, 1613-44, from the originals in the possession of the family* (London 1842); T. Taylor Lewis (ed.) *Letters of Lady Brilliana Harley, Wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath* Camden Society (London 1854)

⁷⁶ Collinson *Birth-pangs of Protestant England*. p.69

⁷⁷ See L. Stone *Uncertain Unions. Marriage in England 1660-1753* (Oxford 1992) p.3; M. Chan *Life into Story. The Courtship of Elizabeth Wiseman* (Aldershot 1998) p.xv for statements about the value of a case-study approach

Chapter two

Early-modern families: paradigms reconsidered

The significance of marriage and the family

Marriage was the bedrock of early-modern families. It formed the basis for future generations and was a way of extending a family's empire. The substantial amounts of money and land exchanged through a marriage settlement made the process second only to probate in passing property from one generation or strand of a family to another.¹ A successful match gave a family the chance to advance in social status and wealth; a bad marriage could have the reverse effect. At the least, a marriage could be vital in enabling a family to provide a livelihood for its members. The implications of marriage for the stability and financial security of gentle and noble families meant it was critically important the 'right' one was secured. The criteria on which such a judgement was made were manifest and varied. They did not just revolve around money. Moreover, the conditions on which a marriage was settled were of considerable concern and interest to a family. Lengthy and protracted negotiations between families were involved, the outcome of which was often a decision not to proceed. The very process of forging a marriage carried significance, demanding deft and calculated action by all parties. For the couple, marriage formed a genuine *rite de passage*, enabling both men and women to fulfil their gender-defined adult roles.² Its impact on individuals' lives, both emotionally and physically, was acutely felt and acknowledged.

Just as marriage was the bedrock of families, the family was the cornerstone of society and carried weight in broader intellectual thinking. It had a strong resonance for the inner and outer worlds of its individual members and for the household and beyond. Seen as a replica of society, or a mini-commonwealth, it was believed to sustain wider society

¹ See L. Stone *Uncertain Unions. Marriage in England 1660-1753* (Oxford 1992) p.15 for an explanation of how the significance of marriage gave rise to litigation about property

² William Gouge *Of Domesticall Duties* (London 1622; Amsterdam 1976) p.449

and to act as an agent for the reformed religion: "what excellent seminaries would families be to Church and Commonwealth?", William Gouge conjectured, if only his advice were heeded.³ For Edward Waterhouse, families' greatest duty was to raise its members to maintain their "honour and reputation".⁴ It was within the family and the household that individuals were socialised and within which, in many ways, they exercised public roles.⁵

The family permeated all aspects of individuals' lives, forming a crucial role in their spiritual and moral training and an important locus for their education (see chapter five). The family and household had interesting complexities in the lives of adolescents and young adults. Members of both sexes could spend several years in households other than that of their immediate family as apprentices, servants or the paying guests of branches of their extended family. Thus, their formative experiences of family and household were not necessarily within those into which they had been born.⁶ This had important implications for how family and household were perceived. The ideal was that households should be self-sufficient, with gentle and noble families sustaining themselves with income generated from their property and lands. In practice, this rarely happened. Younger sons were likely to need to pursue an appropriate vocation to secure a livelihood, and were heavily advised on doing so (see chapter five). The detachment of the nuclear family and household was also undermined by power structures that overarched them in notable ways, while their messages should have strengthened - and have been strengthened by - those of outside parties, including ministers, congregations and schools.⁷

³ Ibid. Preface [p.2b]; J. Morgan *Godly Learning. Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning and Education, 1560-1640* (Cambridge 1986) p.142

⁴ Edward Waterhouse *The Gentleman's Monitor: Or, a Sober Inspection into the Vertues, Vices, and Ordinary Means of the Rise and Decay of Men and Families* (London 1665) p.19

⁵ F. Heal & C. Holmes *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (Basingstoke 1994) Ch.2

⁶ R. O'Day *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900 England, France and the United States of America* (London 1994) p.21; R.B. Outhwaite *Clandestine Marriage in England, 1500-1850* (London 1995) p.xviii

⁷ Morgan *Godly Learning* pp.169-71; A. Fletcher *Reform in the Provinces. The Government of Stuart England* (New Haven 1986) pp.262-63

Nevertheless, both family and household (while the two overlapped, they were not the same thing) were central to individuals' existence and experience.⁸

The importance conferred on the family had significant implications for relationships within it. Men, as fathers, enjoyed sovereignty over their household subjects, including family members and servants. In turn, the image of father endorsed monarchical claims to sovereignty, creating a reciprocal corroboration of political and domestic authority. Men's power derived heavily from their position as head of a household and their authority over their family and servants.⁹ The household was viewed as the proper, and only, domain for women in some prescriptive literature, to the extent those who did not respect this fundamental principle were castigated as unnatural, unhuman and a threat to the social order (see chapter eight).¹⁰ Thus, in symbolic terms at least, family and household represented fundamentally different things for each sex: it epitomised women's subordination and strengthened men's right to external authority and respect.

But reality was not so straightforward. Men could not fulfil the role of head of household if they were not married.¹¹ Women, meanwhile, as wives, mothers, widows and members of the extended family could act in ways that took them well beyond the household.¹² Widows, in particular, could take on the role of head of household where

⁸ See J. Hardwick *The Practice of Patriarchy. Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (Pennsylvania 1998) p.78

⁹ L. Roper *The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford 1989) pp.38-39; O. Hufton *The Prospect Before Her. A History of Women in Western Europe, Volume One. 1500-1800* (London 1995) pp.53,54; D. Cressy *Birth, Marriage and Death. Ritual, Religion and Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford 1997) p.287; Hardwick *The Practice of Patriarchy*. pp.77,226; E.A. Foyster *Manhood in Early Modern England. Honour, Sex and Marriage*. (London 1999) p.23

¹⁰ Henry Smith *A Preparative to Mariage* (London 1591; Amsterdam 1976) pp.79,60 [p.80], 61 [p.81]; Matthew Griffith *Bethel: or, A Forme for Families. In Which all Sorts, of Both Sexes, are so Squared and Framed by the Word of God's Building* (London 1633) p.282

¹¹ See L. Roper *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London 1994) p.46; S.D. Amussen "'The Part of a Christian Man': The Cultural Politics of Manhood in Early Modern England" in S.D. Amussen & M.A. Kishlansky (eds.) *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester 1995) pp.222-23; Foyster *Manhood in Early Modern England*. p.4

¹² See C. Jackson (ed.) *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newtoun, Co. York* Surtees Society Vol.LXII (Durham 1873) p.77 for Alice Thornton's acknowledgement that marriage would make her "a more publicke instrument"

there was no man to fill it (*paterfamilias* is not an expression of "genealogical connection but dependence on authority"), or act jointly with the new head male (possibly their son or stepson).¹³ There is a need, therefore, to dislodge assumptions that women's roles were exclusively domestic or 'private' and to recognise that family and household carried heavy significance for men.¹⁴

A motivating factor for the gentry and nobility to preserve and develop links with their extended family was the material and social benefits these could bring. Gentle and noble families achieved prestige through possessing a long lineage, thus creating a strong interest in their genealogy. Pressure on families to be able to cite their ancestors was likely to have increased their sense of kinship identity and keenness to keep wider familial links alive.¹⁵ This is illustrated by memoir writers such as Gervase Holles, and has to be taken into account as a factor in the increase in autobiographical writings during the period.¹⁶ But there was more to Holles' attachment to this family than pragmatism; genuine affection for his family comes through heavily (see chapter three). The impression is also gained that families had greater fluidity than tight definitions of nuclear unit and household convey and were sustained by stronger emotional bonds than has been assumed.

Experiences of family and kinship structures: historiographical models

While accepting the symbolic significance of the family in social, political and religious terms in the early-modern period, some historians have argued that the family performed only pragmatic functions and have denied its role in providing the emotional

¹³ M. Mitterauer & R. Sieder *The European Family. Patriarchy to Partnership from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford 1982) p.6

¹⁴ P.R. Backscheider 'Introduction' in P.R. Backscheider & T. Dykstal (eds.) *The Intersections of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England* (London 1996) p.6

¹⁵ G.E. Mingay *The Gentry. The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class* (London 1976) p.108; R. Houlbrooke *The English Family, 1450-1700* (Harlow 1984) p.52; J.A. Sharpe *Early Modern England: A Social History, 1450-1760* (London 1987) p.75; J. Eales *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the Civil War* (Cambridge 1990) pp.36-7; A.C. Wood (ed.) *Memorials of the Holles Family, 1493-1656*. Camden Third Series, Vol.IV (London 1937)

¹⁶ Wood *Memorials of the Holles Family*; see M. Mascuch *Origins of the Individualist Self. Autobiography and Self-identity in England, 1591-1791* (Oxford 1997) p.88

and affective support with which it is primarily associated today. Most famously (perhaps infamously), Stone questioned the level of affection and emotion invested in the family, claiming that this changed only in the second half of the seventeenth century.¹⁷ Despite the creation of warmer and more private environments through the increased partitioning of households, Shammaas has suggested few households of the sixteenth and seventeenth century "showed many signs of ... affective or sociable ... domesticity". They met only basic human needs, with time "for leisurely enjoyment of ... one's fellow human beings", confined to feastdays.¹⁸

Other historians have inferred an increasing sense of the family's importance in the seventeenth century, accompanied by a new sentimentality, from a rise in the number of family portraits commissioned during the period and a relative decline in the production of portraits of individuals and depictions of crowds.¹⁹ A similar impression can be gained from much prescriptive literature on the affective and companionate nature of family relations (see chapter eight). Of course, portraits were the manifestation of family life of the rich, although were likely to set an ideal to which some others social groups aspired. Conversely, the limitations imposed by household structure and life-style would have affected those of lower social status to a greater degree than families of the gentry and nobility.²⁰

Arguments, on the one hand, that the practical demands of living weighed against social interaction and, on the other, that families had an increasing interest in themselves,

¹⁷ L. Stone *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London 1977); see also M. Slater *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verneys of Claydon House* (London 1984)

¹⁸ C. Shammaas 'The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America' *Journal of Social History* 14 (1980) pp.3-24

¹⁹ See M. Dewar (ed.) *Sir Thomas Smith, De Republica Anglorum (1583)* (Cambridge 1982) p.59; D. Underdown *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford 1985) pp.9-10; P. Aries *Centuries of Childhood* (Harmondsworth 1973) p.396; M.M. Knappen *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago 1939; 2nd impression 1965) p.465; D. Leverenz *The Language of Puritan Feeling: An Exploration in Literature, Psychology and Social History* (New Jersey 1980) p.70; L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford 1966) pp.269-70; Slater *Family Life* p.30; P. Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, pp.356,392; D. Smith *Masks of Wedlock. Seventeenth-century Dutch Marriage Portraiture* (Essex 1982) p.165

²⁰ See F. Heal *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford 1990) Ch.2

show the need for sensitivity to how families of different social ranks experienced themselves as much as representing two directly conflicting contentions. They also indicate the differing impressions that can be gained from different types of source and the different inferences that can be made from intellectual and artistic ideals in contrast to those from the material and corporeal reality of the majority of the populace. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that, at least for those of high social status, the family was important emotionally as well as physically and economically.

In addition to being careful about our presumptions about the nature of early-modern households, we need to be cautious about applying sociological models for defining family structures and residence patterns. These can detract from more nebulous lines of family interaction that cut through the physical boundaries of the household and transcended the assumed authority, autonomy and discreteness of the nuclear family of father, mother, children and servants.²¹ A focus on models and assumed structures can also distract from the incompleteness of many early-modern families and the complexity of relationships created by death, remarriage and step-relations. We need, therefore, to balance rhetoric and theory with contemporary experience to gain a full picture.

Whether families of the past typically adhered to a nuclear or extended structure in terms of residence, production and economy has attracted the attention of many historians, particularly those that have fostered the "demographic" approach.²² Laslett has been the most influential in denying the existence of complex family structures on the basis that few households comprised more than two generations of family members.²³ As both he and Macfarlane have conceded, however, analysing household composition is just one way of

²¹ See O'Day *Family and Family Relationships*. pp.1-25

²² See M. Anderson *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914* (Basingstoke 1980)

²³ P. Laslett *The World We Have Lost* 2nd edn (London 1971); P. Laslett 'Mean Household Size in England Since the Sixteenth Century' in P. Laslett & R. Wall (eds.) *Household and Family in Past Times* (Cambridge 1972) pp.123-58; see also A. Macfarlane *The Origins of English Individualism. The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford 1978) for a questioning of the validity of the peasant model of multi-generational families living in one household and engaging in communal production and consumption after the thirteenth century

exploring family relationships. It neither enables us to ascertain the level of control or influence that non-residential members of the extended family had over nuclear family units, nor allows an evaluation of the strength of emotional ties between family members physically distanced from one another. In addition, census returns and similar demographic records give only a static impression of household composition. They cannot reveal fluidity in household membership over relatively short periods of time and run the risk of masking changes that affected household composition even if household size remained the same.²⁴

Theories about household and family structure have tended to centre on evidence of change over long time periods that have largely been dictated by traditional chronologies and delineations. They are often in direct, although not deliberate, conflict. Macfarlane has claimed that the extended family has not been prevalent in England since the thirteenth century, although possibly retained currency as an ideal.²⁵ Ruggles has more recently challenged the notion that the extended family disappeared with industrialisation, and has suggested the extended family actually gained in strength between 1750 and 1900.²⁶ Overall, however, a consensus view has evolved (based on findings from parish registers and other census-style records) that, contrary to previous assumptions that pre-industrial societies were founded on extended kinship networks, the nuclear family defined structures for residence and production in early-modern England. This conclusion, in turn, requires revision.

²⁴ See S. Coontz *The Social Origins of Private Life. A History of American Families 1600-1900* (London 1988) pp.21,27; see also O'Day *Family and Family Relationships* p.28; see R.M. Smith 'Marriage Processes in the English Past: Some Continuities' in L. Bonfield (ed.) *The World We Have Gained. Histories of Population and Social Structure. Essays presented to Peter Laslett on his seventieth birthday* (Oxford 1986) pp.43-4, 95 for similar comments about taking a narrow approach to marriage formation and the problems of available sources skewing the conclusions drawn

²⁵ Macfarlane *Origins of English Individualism*. pp.74-5,138-39

²⁶ S. Ruggles *Prolonged Connections: The Rise of the Extended Family in Nineteenth-century England and America* (Wisconsin, 1987); see also review of W. Secombe *Weathering the Storm: Working-class Families from the Industrial Relations to the Fertility Decline* (1993) by L. Beier, *Times Higher Education Supplement* (24th September 1993) p.23

Demographic historians' tendency to focus on household composition to the exclusion of considering wider kinship ties has not gone unchallenged.²⁷ Nevertheless, quantitative findings have sustained the theory that the extended family held little significance in early-modern England.²⁸ Using household size as the single determinant of the strength and significance of kinship structures ignores the degree of influence, communication and emotional attachment that could extend beyond the accepted physical manifestation of the nuclear family (the household). Figures that on the surface suggest continuity and commonality can obscure shifts in attitudes and practice. Although household size in England might not have changed substantially over successive centuries, factors affecting it could have done and, just as importantly, were not necessarily standard across the social spectrum.²⁹ Arguably, the gentry and nobility had more to gain from developing and maintaining their wider family relationship. Apart from enjoying the benefits of proving lineage, they were much more likely to possess the skills of literacy to communicate with family members distanced physically; to enjoy greater geographical mobility; and to have been able to accommodate additional individuals within their households.³⁰ An examination of more qualitative sources shows that simple models of residence patterns and family structures are limiting and unhelpful.

²⁷ See R. Wheaton 'Family and Kinship in Western Europe: The Problem of the Joint Family Household' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* V (1975) pp.601-12 passim; M. Chaytor 'Household and Kinship: Ryton in the Late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' *History Workshop* 10 (1980) pp.26-30,51; Mitterauer & Sieder *The European Family* p.27; O'Day *Family and Family Relationships* pp.25-26; R. Wall 'Work, Welfare and the Family: An Illustration of the Adoptive Family Economy' in Bonfield *et. al. The World We Have Gained* p.262; R. Wall, ed. in collaboration with J. Robin & P. Laslett *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (Cambridge 1983) p.49

²⁸ R.M. Smith (ed.) *Land, Kinship and Life-cycle* (Cambridge 1984) pp.ix-x; see Macfarlane *Origins of English Individualism* p.74; Laslett 'Mean Household Size' pp.157-58

²⁹ Laslett 'Mean Household Size' p.156; Wall 'Work, Welfare and the Family' p.264; see Anderson *Approaches to the History of the Western Family* pp.27-38 for a general critique of the demographic approach

³⁰ Flandrin *Families in Former Times* p.10; R.A. Houlbrooke *The English Family 1450-1700* (Harlow 1984) p.52; J.A. Sharpe *Early Modern England: A Social History 1550-1760* (London 1987) p.75

Fluid practices

Surviving records of early-modern gentle and noble families, including letters, memoirs and account books, belie any assumption that their household composition was typically constant. Descriptions and passing comments indicate household membership changed regularly over short periods of time, depending on individuals' needs and the expedient use of relatives' social contacts, circumstances and material resources. Fluctuations in household membership often arose from families' adherence to established practices. A daughter might be sent to live with relatives who enjoyed a better network of contacts and therefore offered a better chance of securing a husband than did her parents, with its forming a common practice for provincial gentle families to send their daughters to live with London-based relatives to take advantage of the evolving national marriage market centred on the capital. Arrangements were also made for children who had been orphaned or whose parents were temporarily absent.³¹ Lady Joan Barrington raised a number of her grandchildren and children of other relatives, as well as children of local gentle families. Richard Whalley sent his daughter Jane to live with Lady Joan, his sister-in-law, so that she would be subject to a superior educative influence and stand a better chance of securing a worthy suitor. Although plans for Jane initially backfired when she became romantically entangled with the Barrington family's chaplain, Roger Williams, her father's plans eventually met with success (see chapter seven).³²

Newly-married couples of gentle and noble status quite commonly lived with one set of parents, usually those of the groom. Indeed, some gentle families expected this to happen. That the father of an unnamed suitor was unwilling that "his son sholde live with him" after marriage was one reason for Lady Elizabeth Masham's scepticism about the

³¹ V. Brodsky Elliott 'Single Women in the London Marriage Market: Age, Status and Mobility, 1598-1619' in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London 1981) pp.94-5, 99-100

³² A. Searle (ed.) *Barrington Letters, 1628-1632*. Camden Fourth Series, Vol.28 (London 1983) pp.18-9; Letter from Richard Whalley to Lady Joan Barrington, 15 November 1623, BL Egerton MS 2644, f.205; Letter from Jane Hook to Lady Joan Barrington, 28 December [1629] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.112

match for her daughter, Joan Altham (see chapter six). Lady Elizabeth was unable to explain such a deviation from apparently accepted practice, apart from its reflecting the father's general lack of generosity.³³ The Countess of Warwick entered the Rich family's country home in Lees, Essex after wedding Robert, an arrangement not without tension. While most of the household gave her "as kind a welcome as was possible", Mary's new mother-in-law (Robert's step-mother) temporarily left Lees to live with her sister, showing an additional use of the extended family in times of need. Because she had suffered disputes with the "first Lady Rich", she had developed "almost ... a resolution of never more living with any daughter-in-law". Eventually persuaded of Mary's acceptability, she returned to the Rich household and subsequently became "as obliging to me as if she had been my own mother, and would always profess she loved me at that rate".³⁴ Even where living with in-laws immediately after marriage was not seen as ideal, it formed a useful stop-gap until an independent household could be established, as is evident from the correspondence relating to the marriage plans for John Thynne and Joan Hayward (see chapter seven).³⁵

Use of the extended family as a prelude to creating an independent household seems in direct conflict with Laslett's conclusion that residence with parents or parents-in-law was exceptional and again signals differences in family expectation and practice at different social levels. The average age of marriage for those of lower social rank was the mid-twenties for women and late-twenties for men.³⁶ Couples had to amass the financial wherewithal to sustain a household before they could wed. But young men and women of the upper social ranks could usually rely on the resources of their families to sustain a

³³ Letter from Lady Elizabeth Masham to Lady Joan Barrington [undated] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.84; see Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. p.634

³⁴ T. Crofton Croker (ed.) *Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick* (London 1848) pp.14-

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³⁵ See A. Wall (ed.) *Two Elizabethan Women: The Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575-1611*. Wiltshire Record Society Vol. XXXVIII (Devizes 1983) pp.xviii-xix; for further examples of newly-weds living with the groom's family see F. Bamford (ed.) *A Royalist's Notebook. The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander Kt. of Nunwell* (London 1936) pp.45,114

³⁶ E.A. Wrigley & R.S. Schofield *The Population History of England 1541-1871* (London 1981) p.424

match, at least if their marriage was planned or approved by their parents, or parental substitutes. Thus, their marrying played a crucial role in securing attractive links for their family. Differences in the function of marriage for families and the financial arrangements on which marriages were predicated therefore meant that average age of marriage was younger for members of the gentry and nobility than for their less privileged contemporaries.³⁷ While there were concerns about economic reasons leading the nobility, in particular, to marry their children off before they were of age, the clear financial role marriage played for families of high social status did not mean love did not figure or that relatively independently-made courtship did not occur (see chapters eight and ten).

In addition to adhering to established conventions, individuals could live with members of their extended family for specific reasons. Sixteen-year-old Framlingham Gawdy was moved temporarily from his father and stepmother's house in Norfolk to that of his uncle in London after disgracing himself with a maid. The action both removed him from the scene of scandal and meant he could be subjected to a programme of reform.³⁸ William Stout's sister was sent to live with relatives "to divert her" following the death of her father and two siblings given the depth of her bereavement.³⁹ Adult children could also be accommodated. Philip Gawdy's wife, Bridget, stayed with her brother-in-law and his second wife, Dorothy, while he was overseas, presumably to avoid loneliness, while Lady Ruth Lamplugh (née Barrington) returned to her parents' home in 1626 following the breakdown of her marriage to Sir George.⁴⁰ That individuals moved, or were moved, from one household to another within their extended family in times of need is illustrated on a grand scale by the Bramston family. Sir John reported his father's household at Skreens in Essex was expanded to "about fiftie" members to avoid the worst ravages of the civil war,

³⁷ See Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. p.654 for percentage rates of those of the nobility and gentry married at different ages

³⁸ Letters from Philip Gawdy to Sir Bassingborne Gawdy, 28 October 1605 & 20 November 1605. BL Egerton MS.2804, ff.201,205

³⁹ See J.D. Marshall *The Autobiography of William Stout, 1665-1752* (Manchester 1967) p.176

⁴⁰ Letter from Philip Gawdy to Sir Bassingborne Gawdy, 29 June [1605] BL Egerton MS 2804, f.199 Searle *Barrington Letters*. p.19; see also C. Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell Symphony* (London 1945) p.42

necessitating that they "contribute[d] toward the table, and to find oats for our horses".⁴¹ In his will dated 23rd March 1639, Sir Richard Hutton listed the lands and estates that he wished to pass to his wife (whom he also appointed as his sole executor), explaining,

This I doe for the increase of her joynture and that she may be better able to keepe house and hospitalitie at Gouldsbrough and there to entertaine her children when they shall come to her.⁴²

It is thus clear that Sir Richard expected, and wanted, his widow to act as a regular hostess to their adult children and their families.

Taking young members of the extended family into a household was not done as a favour. Parents usually seem to have paid an allowance for their offspring's keeping. Richard Whalley initially gave Lady Joan £40 a year to raise his daughter. When he could no longer afford to do so, he asked that Jane might work for her living in the Barrington household, such was his belief in the benefits of her remaining there.⁴³ When Philip Gawdy undertook to educate and polish his nephew's manners by introducing Framlingham to London society and taking him to see "lyons, and tombes at Westminster", he felt it necessary to assure the boy's father his money was being well spent: Framlingham should "do very well, and make an honest man".⁴⁴ Apparently feeling further justification was required, Philip subsequently reminded Sir Bassingborne that it was not possible to live in London cheaply and reported Framlingham was "better in his behaviour tenn tymes the valewe of expence".⁴⁵

⁴¹ P. Braybrooke (ed.) *The Autobiography of Sir John Bramston. K.B. of Skreens, in the Hundred of Chelmsford* Camden Society (London 1845) p.109; presumably this total included resident servants, as well as servants who travelled with 'migrant' family members

⁴² W.R. Prest (ed.) *The Diary of Sir Richard Hutton 1614-1639 with related texts*. Selden Society Supplementary Series, Vol.9 (London 1991) p.140

⁴³ Letter from Richard Whalley to Lady Joan Barrington, 23 November 1623. BL Egerton MS 2644, f.205

⁴⁴ Letter from Philip Gawdy to Sir Bassingborne Gawdy, 28th October 1605 BL Egerton MS 2804, f.201

⁴⁵ Letter from Philip Gawdy to Sir Bassingborne Gawdy, 20 November [1605] BL Egerton MS 2804, f.205

A substantial fluidity emerges, then, in household size and composition. *Ad hoc* arrangements were made to help members who had fallen on hard times or were in need of company, while family resources, connections and geographical location were optimised. The examples cited here do not undermine historians' rejection of traditional assumptions that families in pre-industrial England lived in large, multi-generational kinship groups, since they are taken wholly from families of the upper social ranks, formed temporary measures and did not constitute multi-generational living *per se*.⁴⁶ But they do show it is misplaced to downplay the significance of extended families and frequent changes in residence patterns. Both factors have to be taken into account to gain a feel for the interaction that took place between family members and the importance of kinship ties within gentle and noble families. The incompleteness of families was a further dynamic that added to the complexity of interaction and roles.

Family realities

High rates of mortality, the frequent incidence of remarriage and the resulting complexity of step-relation networks had a profound impact on family relationships, residence patterns and power dynamics, often producing tensions and ambiguities.⁴⁷ Although the unit of father, mother, children and servants formed the standard household and enjoyed currency as an ideal, its existence was often frustrated, producing incomplete nuclear families and raising the significance of kinship ties. Children were expected to take on heavy responsibilities for their brothers and sisters as part of their contractual obligation to their parents (especially when only one was living), in addition to considering the impact of their marriage choices on their siblings.⁴⁸ The reality was that nuclear family members were often simply not available to fulfil the roles accorded them by convention

⁴⁶ See Laslett 'Mean Household Size'. p.156

⁴⁷ See Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. p.270; P. Laslett *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge 1977) p.58; Laslett *The World We Have Lost*. p.103; Chaytor 'Household and Kinship'. pp.29,30

⁴⁸ P. Earle *The Making of the English Middle Class* (London 1989) p.236

and prescription. Contingency measures were thus required and, indeed, used. Their need and importance was also acknowledged within advisory literature (see chapter eight). Significantly, Henry Smith explained a step-mother was a "stedmother", who should "love" her step-children "and tender them, and cherish them as their mother did".⁴⁹

Houlbrooke has speculated that widows with children were inhibited from remarrying by the problems that might arise within a reconstructed family.⁵⁰ Widowers could refrain from remarriage for the same reason: Sir John Bramston explained his father had delayed remarrying until he had married off his sister and his children had grown up.⁵¹ But Todd has argued that widows with young children were more likely to remarry than either widows with grown-up children or those without any children.⁵² The gentle and noble families considered in this study do not present any evidence that children formed a deterrent to remarriage (although they do offer examples of widows choosing not to remarry for other reasons; see chapters four and ten). Remarriages could create difficult situations, while some individuals and commentators were against remarriage on principle.⁵³ Conversely, some widows and widowers came under heavy pressure to remarry, with arguments put forward for the moral acceptability and the practical expediency of their doing so.⁵⁴

49 Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. p.106

50 Houlbrooke *English Family*. p.215; see also chapter ten

51 Braybrooke *Autobiography of Sir John Bramston*. p.34

52 B.J. Todd 'The Remarrying Widow: A Stereotype Reconsidered' in M. Prior (ed.) *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* (London 1985) pp.66,68; see also V. Brodsky 'Widows in Late Elizabethan London: Remarriage, Economic Opportunity and Family Orientations' in Bonfield *The World We Have Gained*. pp.122-154; B.A. Holderness 'Widows in Pre-industrial Society: An Essay upon their Economic Functions' in Smith *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*. p.431

53 See Katherine Austen's Miscellanies, BL Add. MS 4454 f.69; Bamford *A Royalist's Notebook*. pp.66ff,173; Devotional Pieces by Elizabeth, Countess of Bridgewater, BL Add. MS 607. f.86; G. Edelen (ed.) *William Harrison 'The Description of England'* (New York 1968) pp.37-38; Sir Walter Raleigh 'Instructions to his Son and to Posterity' 2nd edn. (1632) in L.B. Wright (ed.) *Advice to a Son: Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh and Francis Osborne* (Ithaca 1962) p.22; William Vaughan *The Golden-grove, Moralized in Three Bookes: A Worke Very Necessary for All Such, as Would Know How to Governe Themselves, Their Houses, or Their Countrey* 2nd edn (London 1608) 2nd Bk. Ch.9

54 See J. Hutchinson (ed.) *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, Governor of Nottingham Castle and Town ... Written by his Widow Lucy* (London 1806) pp.10,31; Bamford *Royalist's Notebook*. p.173; A. Day *The English Secretorie* (London 1586; Menston 1967) pp.122-25

While patterns of inheritance were clearly based on the structure of the nuclear family, these could be upset by a family's lack of male heir and raised the importance of female family members in the passage of property and estates.⁵⁵ However, the case of Lady Anne Clifford, who campaigned ceaselessly to establish her rights to her father's estates over that of her uncle and cousins, shows that a daughter's inheritance rights, in the absence of a son, were not automatic and could be denied to all but the most tenacious women.⁵⁶ There was a contemporary ambivalence about whether it was wise for men to marry wealthy heiresses. The monetary reward was obvious, but such merits could skew the proper relationship between marriage partners; too rich a wife might not accept her subordinate position (see chapters four and eight).⁵⁷ All these factors have therefore to be considered in gaining a feel for the reality of family life and relationships.

Tensions between step-relations, created by the threats to inheritance wrought by remarriage, are revealed sharply through the Gawdy family's correspondence. In 1586, Philip Gawdy's elder brother, Basssingborne, married Anne, elder daughter and heiress of her widowed father, Sir Charles Framlingham. Sir Charles subsequently married Elizabeth Barnardiston, creating concern among the Gawdy family that a male heir would be produced who would usurp Anne's rights to her father's estates. Such alarm was fuelled by Philip Gawdy's access to London gossip. On 18 June 1588, he reported rumours that Anne's stepmother was pregnant. His sighting of her confirmed that "she hath layde out her belly as yf she were within ten weeks of her teeming". He offered comfort, however, by stating

⁵⁵ Stone *Open Elite*. pp.73-74

⁵⁶ D.J.H. Clifford (ed.) *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford* (London, 1990) passim; see J.P. Cooper 'Patterns of Inheritance and Settlement by Great Landowners from the Fifteenth Century to the Eighteenth Century' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E.P. Thompson (eds.) *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800* (Cambridge 1976) p.301 for estimates of families producing male heirs

⁵⁷ For an explanation of the law concerning heiresses, see Vaughan *The Golden-grove*. 2nd Bk. Ch.6; see S. Ozment *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Harvard 1983) p.58; see C. Carlton 'The Widow's Tale: Male Myth and Female Reality in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century England' *Albion* X (1979) p.119,128,129 for scepticism about whether widows were tempted to remarry younger men

her apparent pregnancy was regarded by many as "a great mockery", and that she had been known previously to feign being with child.⁵⁸

In a letter written two days later, Philip explained that, while he "love[d] not to be the author of ill newes", he had again met with Lady Elizabeth Framlingham and had become convinced that she was pregnant afterall, given her "belly [was] somewhat greate". She had not opened conversation on the matter, but her female companion had spoken with Philip privately, highlighting the uncomfortable question for Bassingborne and Anne Gawdy, "What if my Lady commethe forthe with a boye[?]". Subsequent confidential conversations with an acquaintance of Sir Charles and his wife, Mr. Brooke, revealed that Elizabeth herself had denied that she was pregnant, and Mr. Brooke was willing to "lay a hundred pounds to xii d. that she is not with chylde". Philip tried to assure his brother of this being the case by referring to other women who had erroneously been rumoured to have been pregnant; for example, "Mr. L. Wyndsor hath bene with chyld this fyfitye weekes and now they say that she is not with chyld". This would appear to have been an end to the matter. Anne Gawdy died in 1594. The family estates passed to her son, Framlingham, a few months later, following the death of her father.⁵⁹

It is unclear from Philip Gawdy's letters whether Lady Elizabeth Framlingham created or encouraged the false rumour of her pregnancy. She might have been the victim of gossip in a society keen to see a newly-married woman pregnant. Certainly, Mr. Brooke reported her protestations of innocence and her having been "very angry that any shold give out any such speaches" that she was with child.⁶⁰ In either case, the incident highlights the threat that the prospect of pregnancy in a second marriage posed to the daughter of a first marriage. That so many families were compounded by remarriage and

⁵⁸ Letter from Philip Gawdy to Bassingborne Gawdy, 18 June [1588], BL Egerton MS 2804, f.52

⁵⁹ Letter from Philip Gawdy to Bassingborne Gawdy, 20 June [1588], BL Egerton MS 2804, f.56; I.H. Jeayes (ed.) *Letters of Philip Gawdy of West Harling, Norfolk, and of London to Various Members of His Family, 1579-1616* (London, 1906) p.xiv

⁶⁰ Letter from Philip Gawdy to Bassingborne Gawdy, 20 June [1588] BL Egerton MS 2804, f.56

step-children perhaps meant that a significant number of women who lacked natural brothers came to live in fear of losing what had once seemed an assured inheritance. Moreover, the Gawdy case suggests that step-mothers could, if they wished, play on such a fear and win a power, of sorts, over their new relatives.

The example also shows how family relationships could both be complicated by remarriage and ameliorated by the extended family. Lady Elizabeth's rumoured pregnancy either caused or exacerbated tensions between herself and her step-daughter. Intervention by Anne Gawdy's brother-in-law was partially successful in allaying these. Philip reported that he had visited Lady Elizabeth and had been "carefull" to ensure that she received all Bassingborne's and Anne's messages. This seemed to pay off: "after some few words of unkindness", Lady Elizabeth "protested that she accounted not more dearly of any living then of" Anne and her husband, and pledged to visit them as soon as she could. However, she was disappointed her step-daughter had "not plyed her with no letters". Again, Philip dispelled bad feeling by claiming Anne had, in fact, written to her. Apparently placated, Lady Elizabeth stated, just "two lynes of her [Anne's] hand shold fetch her at any tyme".⁶¹ Whether or not these affectionate sentiments expressed by Lady Elizabeth were genuine - or whether Philip's protestations of Anne's having written were truthful - they indicate a wish on both sides to establish good relations, while the importance of Philip's role as mediator within his extended family is clear. Members of extended families could both create and quell problematical relationships depending on circumstances and their personal inclination, action and skill.

The creation of new step-relationships could make lines of authority, deference and inheritance complex and prone to challenge.⁶² Uneasiness between a step-parent and -child, particularly a dowager and the new male head of a family, is revealed in the

⁶¹ Letter from Philip Gawdy to Bassingborne Gawdy, 2 May [1589] BL Egerton MS 2804, f.117

⁶² See A. Macfarlane (ed.) *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683* (Oxford 1976) p.3 for Josselin's comments on tensions between himself and his father's second wife, manifested in "her disrespect in somethings towards mee"

Barrington family's correspondence. When Sir Thomas died in 1644, his widow Lady Judith took an even more active part in estate and business matters than she had during his lifetime, bringing her into direct conflict with her step-son, Sir John. He interpreted Lady Judith's having trees felled on his jointure lands when they were in her custody as her attempting to profit personally. Crucially, he believed that she would have treated the lands differently if they had been due to pass to her natural son. Lady Judith's defence was that she had had the trees felled to obtain timber for repairs on estate buildings and thus to maintain the lands and property that would pass to Sir John on her death. Despite Sir John's animosity, Lady Judith continued to sign her letters, "your very affectionate mother" (such loose use of familial terms was commonplace), suggesting that strains created by estate matters did not lessen her love for her stepson. That Sir John subsequently issued a law suit against her has to be seen in the context of his general fondness for litigation.⁶³

Concluding remarks

The value of theoretical models is limited by the actual structures and realities of families. They tend to mask how families were experienced and the endlessly changing nature of family networks and residence patterns. Individuals who reached adulthood, married and reproduced became a member of two nuclear families, providing their original family remained reasonably intact. However, demographic trends indicate that, for most individuals, their experience of family was incomplete and complicated by themselves and their relatives remarrying and creating step-relationships. Individuals were not insensitive to the impact of these changes. Contemplating marriage to Marie Pinaule, John Barrington stressed that his love for his wife "shall never make me forget the love, honour And respect which I owe" his father, Sir Francis (see chapter six).⁶⁴ Philip Gawdy was perhaps more candid. After his marriage to Bridget Strangman, he had a new 'benchmark' against which

⁶³ G.A. Loundes (ed.) 'The History of the Barrington Family' *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* Vol.1, New Series (Colchester 1878) pp.43-45; Letters from Lady Judith to Sir John Barrington, 10 & 12 May 1647, BL Egerton MS 2648, ff.137,140; Petition of Sir John Barrington Bt. to Parliament regarding his suit against Lady Judith Barrington (1650) BL Egerton MS 2651, f.183

⁶⁴ Letter from John Barrington to Sir Francis Barrington, dated 12th April 1621 in Loundes *History of the Barrington Family*. p.25

to measure his feelings for his brother and successive sisters-in-law; he acted for them as conscientiously as he did "for lyfe, wyfe and children".⁶⁵ Dorothy Leigh advised that a sign of the quality of love that should exist between couples was the scriptural command that they should leave their parents on marriage, while Maria Thynne reminded her mother-in-law (with whom she did not enjoy a good relationship) that her husband's primary duty was to herself.⁶⁶

Perceptions of, and attachment to, the family extended well beyond the confines of the household and the nuclear unit. Family identity was not defined firmly by this physical structure, nor was the composition of households fixed. Each of these factors intimates that a focus on household size and structure is not only unhelpful, but can actually hinder analysis of the qualitative features of family relationships. The make-up of households could change over short periods of time (albeit with a core membership retained), while the influence enjoyed by individuals could transcend the household and the confines of their immediate family. A distinction between nuclear and extended structures is therefore almost irrelevant to experiences of the early-modern English gentry and nobility. At the least, is the need to make a sensitive appraisal of kinship to gain a full sense of the family dynamics pertaining to marriage formation, in terms of power relationships, spheres of influence and affective ties, and to consider the dimensions of sex and gender.

⁶⁵ Letter from Philip Gawdy to Bassingborne Gawdy [undated;1597?] BL Egerton MS 2804 f.121

⁶⁶ Dorothy Leigh *The Mothers Blessing: Or, The Godly Counsaile of a Gentle-woman, not Long Since Deceased, Left Behind her for her Children* 7th edn (London 1621) p.56; letter from Maria Thynne to Joan Thynne [undated] in S. Trill, K. Chedgzoy & M. Osborne (eds.) *Lay by Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen. Women writing in England, 1500-1700* (London 1997) p.81

Setting the scene

An examination of the building blocks for considering marriage formation and sex and gender roles within early-modern families has highlighted the complexities and ambiguities of available sources, together with the difficulties inherent in approaching the topics. Experiences of family life and families were varied and subject to significant degrees of fluidity, nuance and change. Our difficulties in understanding them are compounded by the complex relationships between prescription and description and between prescription, description and lived experience. For these reasons, a cautious approach is demanded, both to available sources and applying models of family and kinship to the evidence that sources bestow.

Although theoretical models can help clarify and direct historical thinking, they can also obscure the true nature of experience and underlying attitudes. It is important that the intricacies of examples presented by sources are examined carefully and their inconsistencies disentangled. A strong awareness is needed of source type without inferring a fundamental divide between published and personal materials or works within different genres, while it cannot be assumed contemporaneous prescription was monolithic.

On the surface, there appears to have been a strong contemporary awareness of differences in male and female roles. However, a survey of available sources relating to family experience has hinted at a more nebulous world of gendered experience and how the gentle and noble young were prepared for their adult roles. It is these matters to which the next chapters turn.

Sex and gender within families: identities and roles

Thinking on sex and gender

Early-modern understandings and dynamics sex and gender were, in many ways, predicated heavily on a sense of separate male and female identities. Christianity and Galenist and Aristotelian notions of bodily humors influenced intellectual thinking. While humoral theory ascribed men the qualities of hotness and dryness - thereby giving them rationality, creativity, courage and strength - women were cold and wet. They therefore lacked positive male attributes.¹ Men were the norm from which women deviated. The female sex formed a marginal and incomplete version of the male.² At the same time, certain qualities - most obviously the ability to give birth - conferred upon women a significance and power.

'Masculine' and 'feminine' formed ubiquitous expressions of opposites.³ Barnabe Rich, in the preface to *Farewell to a Militarie Profession* (1589), cited the male and female worlds represented by Mars and Venus, or war and love.⁴ Gender also shot through religious thinking. The Pauline notion that a wife was to her husband as the church was to Christ formed a recurrent analogy in the marital conduct books.⁵ Fletcher has blamed scripture for proscribing and delimiting female behaviour, stating that "perhaps the most disturbing legacy of all from the biblical teachings" was the "gender construction of girls" in ways that deprived the female sex "the proper fulfilment of their energies".⁶ Much

¹ See M.E. Weisner *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1993) p.27

² See T. Lacqueur *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Massachusetts 1990) pp.4-5

³ See J. Cadden *Meanings of Sex Differences in the Middle Ages. Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge 1993) p.280

⁴ T.M. Cranfill (ed.) *Rich's Farewell to Military Profession, 1581* (Austin 1959) Dedicatorie "To the right courteous gentlemen", p.3

⁵ P. Crawford *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (London 1993) pp.13,17

⁶ A. Fletcher 'Prescription and Practice and the Upbringing of Children' in D. Wood (ed.) *The Church and Childhood. Studies in Church History Vol.31* (Oxford 1994) p.346

artistic literature explored the roles, and power relationships between, men and women, deriving comedy from the subversion of the established sexual hierarchy.

While the impression is gained that sex and gender formed significant strands of thinking in both the educated and popular mind, neither seems to have been subject to rigid demarcation. A more detailed exploration of sources indicates that gendered attributes were not so dissimilar, and not so rigidly attached to each sex, as we might expect. Rich, for example, rehearsed a case for all men opting for the gentler, female world of Venus, suggesting that a man's making such a choice represented maturation.⁷ Although this advice might have been ironic, it highlights that men's adoption of the feminine was not outside the bounds of comprehension, even if it formed a reliable source of humour. Commonalities emerge in early-modern thinking on masculinity and femininity, at least in terms of codes for the higher social ranks. That the overriding tenet of male supremacy - fuelled by scripture and political, legal and economic thinking - created a fundamental mismatch between the two *increases*, rather than decreases, the importance of similarities and parallels.

The manifestations of prescribed inequality between the sexes in the household were complex. In his advice for married couples, Matthew Griffith instructed that a wife should be to her husband as the moon was to the sun:

... the Wife in her Husbands absence shines in the family, like the faire Moone among the lesser starres: but when he comes in, it will be her modestie to contract, and withdraw herselfe.⁸

On the one hand, this suggests the implausibility of a couple sharing genuinely joint or equal power over their family and household. On the other, it clearly portrays wives as a

⁷ Cranfill Rich's *Farewell to Military Profession*. p.3

⁸ Matthew Griffith *Bethel: Or, A Forme for Families. In Which All Sorts of Both Sexes, are so Squared, and Framed by the Word of Food of God, as They May Best Serve in Their Severall Places, for Usefull Pieces in God's Building* (London 1613) p.326

legitimate source of power; their exercising authority in their husbands' absence was, literally, as natural as night follows day. Far from forming polar opposites - the husband all-powerful and the wife powerless - marriage partners enjoyed complementary authority, albeit within a protocol that insisted on a fundamental inequality between them.⁹ This relationship had important corollaries. Not least, for women to exercise familial and domestic authority, they could not simply be passive or merely subordinate, as is explored in chapter four.¹⁰ Although women were expected to defer to their menfolk because of their innate inferiority, they were accorded a spiritual equality with men, thereby placing gender differentiation firmly in corporeal realms.¹¹ Moreover, it was certain men to whom women were expected to defer, while some men had to defer to some women. The nuances of supremacy and subordination depended on determinants of age, social status and life-cycle, as much as sex and gender, and changed as individuals progressed through their lives and took on different roles.¹²

Early-modern ideas about gender were sustained by a number of related ideologies between which tensions can be detected. The marriage relationship was based on male authority and female subjection. But a strong emphasis was also placed on mutuality and companionship (see chapters eight, nine and ten). These two tenets of thinking were reconciled by expecting a husband to love his wife, providing that she reciprocated with respect and obedience. More difficult to square were the beliefs that gender roles were natural - that it was part of the divinely-ordained order that women should be subject to men - and that members of both sexes needed to be trained to fulfil their gender-defined

⁹ See also Dudley Fenner 'The Order of the Household: Described Methodically out of the Word of God, with the Contrary Abuses Found in the World' in L. Davis (ed.) *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance. An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents* (New York & London 1998) pp.165-82

¹⁰ See L. Pollock "'Teach her to live under obedience': The Making of Women in the Upper Ranks of Early Modern England' *Continuity and Change* 4 (1989) pp.231-58

¹¹ See L. Roper *The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford 1989) pp.265-67

¹² See L. Stanley 'Women Have Servants and Men Never Eat: Issues in Reading Gender, Using the Case Study of Mass Observations 1937 Day-Diaries' *Women's History Review* 4 (1995) p.86; T. Hareven 'The Family as Process: The Historical Study of the Family Cycle' *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974) pp.322-29

roles. This raises issues about how individuals should be raised for adulthood, the nature of children, and the need to condition and cultivate to achieve virtue. These issues are explored in chapter five.

A note on 'gender'

There is a value in distinguishing between the ideological construction of differences between men and women, on the one hand, and the biological and physiological differences between the sexes on the other.¹³ Framing the study of relationships between men and women as the study of gender forces us to think about why relationships were as they were in previous societies and to explore the thinking, structures and mores that created and informed them. There is the danger, however, of taking the notion of gender-as-construct too far and inferring that 'male' and 'female' were simply cultural manifestations of language and ideology and that sex and gender had no necessary relationship.¹⁴

Accompanying the idea of gender as social construct is the notion that masculinity and femininity have always existed as relational codes, with neither having had independence from the other.¹⁵ Connell has claimed, "A culture that does not treat women and men as bearers of polarised character types ... does not have a concept of masculinity and femininity in the sense of modern European/American culture".¹⁶ This indicates a pre-determined view of the nature of masculinity and femininity, rather than acknowledging that gender relations and roles are likely to have varied across time and cultures.¹⁷ Gender

¹³ See J. Lorber *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven 1994) pp.ix,1; J. Wallach Scott 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?' *American Historical Review* 91 (1986) pp.1056, 1070, 1074

¹⁴ See L. Roper *Oedipus and the Devil. Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994) pp.17-18; C.A. Lees (ed.) *Medieval Masculinities. Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minnesota 1994) p.xix

¹⁵ See M. Roper & J. Tosh (eds.) *Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London, 1990) p.2

¹⁶ R.W. Connell *Masculinities* (Cambridge 1995) p.68

¹⁷ See P. Griffiths 'Meanings of Nightwalking in Early Modern England' *The Seventeenth Century* XIII (1998) p.231

needs to be seen in a relational way to discourage an essentialist view of the relationship between sex and gender and to force consideration of the construction of male power and female subordination. But such an approach can mask overlaps in codes for men and women. Focusing on difference can detract from areas in which the sexes shared common obligations and expectations and encourage a tendency to see relations between men and women only through the prism of gender. Instead, gender needs to be treated as one element among many that affected, determined and shaped relations between the sexes.¹⁸

The following three chapters explore how notions of sex and gender interacted with other factors to inform codes of conduct for the upper social ranks and views on how children should be raised to fulfil these. While highly significant, neither sex nor gender held a monopoly over roles and conduct. Age, social and sibling hierarchy created important nuances, while the need to promote and preserve family interests militated against firm gender delineations. Instead, there was significant elision in male and female roles and ideals of demeanour that had important implications for the scope of individuals' action, their authority in different contexts, and their relationships with one another. This blurring, in turn, informed childrearing and education.

¹⁸ See Lorber *Paradoxes of Gender*. p.5; G. Walker 'Women, theft and the world of stolen goods' in J. Kermode & G. Walker (eds.) *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London 1994) pp.82-99; M. Richmond-Abbott *Masculine and Feminine Gender Roles over the Life Cycle*. 2nd edn (New York 1992) pp.4-6

Chapter three

Gentle males?

The identity of early-modern English gentlemen

Evolving subjects

Prescriptive literature, including the individual counsels that fathers offered their sons, indicates that the prized and desired attributes of manliness in early-modern England were those of restraint, politeness, sobriety and religiosity. Personal accounts left by some gentlemen show that they, at least, made concerted efforts to fulfil the ideal set for them and were keen that future generations should do the same. There was also a keenness among families, and more particularly wives, to depict their men as exemplifying such manhood. Margaret Cavendish vouched for her husband's gentle masculinity, comparing him to "Titus the deliciae of mankind, by reason of his sweet, gentle, and obliging nature" and explaining he was "a loyal subject, a kind husband, a loving father, a generous master, and a constant friend".¹

Did gentlemen generally conduct themselves in the prescribed manner, or was the publication of so many advisory texts evidence of behaviour of a very different complexion? Literature published for gentlemen during the period might not have been descriptive, but a reaction to outspoken, rude, bawdy and profane conduct.² Hodgekin has suggested that masculine code's reception was ambivalent, not endorsed by all, and seen by some as demeaning and feminizing, while Bryson has emphasised the strong libertine streak that ran through the early-modern social elite.³ There does seem, however, to have

¹ C.H. Firth (ed.) *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. The Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle (1667)*. (London 1886) pp.203-4; see also N.H. Keeble "'The Colonel's Shadow': Lucy Hutchinson, women's writing and the Civil War' in T. Healy & J. Sawday (eds.) *Literature and the English Civil War* (Cambridge 1990) p.229 for an equivalent description of Colonel Hutchinson

² See A.B. Ferguson *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham, North Carolina 1965) p.185 for the fashion to attack the gentry and nobility on their lack of commitment to education

³ K. Hodgekin 'Thomas Whythorne and the Problems of Mastery' *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1990) pp.20-1; A. Bryson *From Courtesy to Civility. Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England*. (Oxford 1998) p.275; see also E.A. Foyster *Manhood in Early Modern England. Honour, Sex and Marriage*

been agreement that true masculinity rested on self-control and securing obedience from men of lower social status and women. A balanced life-style was also crucial. For Nicholas Breton, a gentleman should be "well acquainted" with "the Honour of the Court, and the Pleasure of the Countrey".⁴ Anxiety that masculinity was in a precarious state almost seems to have given it strength, with the reiteration of its key ideological tenets acting to reinforce them.

Castiglione's *Cortegiano* (translated and published in English by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561) and Sir Thomas Elyot's *The boke named the Governour* (1531) were particularly influential in shaping thinking on early-modern masculinity.⁵ Ideas were linked to contemporary debate about the nature of gentility and nobility: was it simply in the blood, or did it depend on cultivating personal attributes? Birth formed a basic prerequisite, but personal endeavour rose in prominence between the medieval and early-modern periods.⁶ Richard Brathwait stated emphatically, "Vertue is the greatest Signall and Symbol of Gentry" and was manifested in "goodnesse of person". He cited "Thomas, Viscount Wentworth, Lo[rd] President of York", to whom he dedicated his treatise, as a consummate gentleman and lamented individuals who tried "to purchase ... the title" (perhaps reflecting a broader sense that social progression was becoming too easy, especially during the reign of James I).⁷ Moreover, gentility could only be achieved over

(London 1999) p.46

⁴ Nicholas Breton 'The Court and Country, or A briefe Discourse Dialogue-wise set down betweene a Courtier and a Country-man'. (1618) in W. Hazlitt *Traits Illustrating English Manners, etc. 1579-1618* (London 1868) p.175; see Firth *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*. pp.185-86,208 for stresses on the Duke of Newcastle's exemplary combination of domestic and civic attributes

⁵ Baldesar Castiglione *The Book of the Courtier* (London 1967); D.W. Rude (ed.) *A Critical edition of Sir Thomas Elyot's "The Boke named the Governour"* (New York 1992); see P. Burke *The Fortunes of the Courtier European Recognition of Castiglione's 'Cortegiano'* (Cambridge 1995); A.B. Ferguson *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry. Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Dreams*. (Durham, North Carolina 1960) pp.219-20; A.B. Ferguson *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (Washington 1986) p.55ff.

⁶ Ferguson *Articulate Citizen*. p.187

⁷ Richard Brathwait *The English Gentleman* (London 1630; Amsterdam 1975) Epistle Dedicatory; 'Preface to the Knowing Reader'

a period of time (both personally during childhood and adolescence and in family terms over generations), thus setting a difficult hurdle for pretenders.⁸

It would be wrong to assume too marked a contrast between ideologies on what it was to be a 'medieval' and 'early-modern' man. There was more a shift of emphasis than a complete new framing of masculinity, with the chivalric code becoming tempered by a greater stress on the values of Christianity, humanity, domesticity, education and civic responsibility.⁹ These developments have been linked to a 'civilizing process'; the related construction of social distinction based on politeness, refinement and cleanliness; and, more pragmatically, an increasing need for educated men to support the growing 'civil service'.¹⁰ But the military ideals of chivalry were not lost; male strength and heroic deeds continued to hold sway.¹¹ Sir Walter Raleigh described himself at his trial in 1603 as "Wholly gentleman, wholly soldier".¹² However, by the sixteenth century, a man's maleness was measured more by his fulfilling civic duties than his military prowess. It was also heavily informed by family, as considered here.

⁸ See T.F. Mayer (ed.) *Thomas Starkey. A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* Camden Fourth Series, Vol.37 (London 1989) pp.75-6,124; S. Shapin *A Social History of Truth. Civility and Science in Seventeenth-century England* (Chicago 1994) Ch.2; J. Powis *Aristocracy* (Oxford 1984) pp.19-22

⁹ See M. Vale *The Gentleman's Recreations. Accomplishments and Pastimes of the English Gentleman 1580-1601* (Cambridge 1977) pp.2-3; Ferguson *Articulate Citizen*. pp.167,187; C.G. Nauert *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge 1995) pp.15-16; A.B. Ferguson *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry*. pp.182-83, 219-20; M. James *Society, Politics and Culture. Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge 1986) pp.308-9,413; A. Stewart *Close Readers. Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England*. (Princeton 1997) p.xxxiv

¹⁰ See N. Elias *The Process of Civilization* English trans. 2 Vols. (Oxford 1978-82) passim; H. Cunningham *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (Harlow 1995) p.5; K. Thomas 'Cleanliness and Godliness in Early Modern England' in G.E. Aylmer & J.S. Morrill (eds.) *Land, Men and Beliefs. Studies in Early-Modern History*. (London 1983) p.44; A. Fletcher 'Honour, Reputation and Local Officeholding in Elizabethan and Stuart England' in A. Fletcher & J. Stevenson (eds.) *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge 1985) p.93; Ferguson *Articulate Citizen*. pp.167,174,187

¹¹ Fletcher *Sex, Gender and Subordination*. pp.129-30; Shapin *A Social History of Truth*. p.63; A. Bryson 'Gesture, Demeanour and the Image of the Gentleman' in L. Gent N. Llewellyn (eds.) *Renaissance Bodies. The Human Figure in English Culture c.1540-1660* (London 1990) pp.145-50; M.L. Bush *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Analysis* (Manchester 1984) p.71; Stewart *Close Relations. Humanism*. pp.xxxiv-xxxv; Ferguson *The Chivalric Tradition*. p.11

¹² Quoted in R. Nye *A Choice of Sir Walter Raleigh's Verse* (London 1972) p.11; see I. Roy 'The Profession of Arms' in W. Prest (ed.) *The Professions in Early Modern England*. (London 1987) p.184

That the study of masculinity has only recently occupied historians cannot be explained by a dearth of sources. There is a plentiful supply of material, at least for considering prescribed codes of gentlemanly conduct. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries what it was to be a man was seen as a subject for legitimate description and analysis. There has been a tendency to assume that, while the conduct of women was highly prescribed in early-modern England, men were allowed a much greater freedom and autonomy (see chapter four). But this was not the case.¹³ While the basic inequality existed that men levelled didacticism at both sexes (with a few exceptions), the distinct impression is gained that male youths were not expected to know automatically how to be men (see chapter five).¹⁴ Richard Brathwait wrote his treatise for gentlemen first; only after encouragement from his readers that he could usefully advise a female audience did he write a companion volume for gentlewomen.¹⁵

Moreover, early-modern guidance on gentle masculinity suggests as great a concern to differentiate gentlemen by social status as to distinguish men from women. Shapin has argued that male-female difference, particularly in terms of female constraint and subjection, was so entrenched as not to require exposition. Distinctions of social status, in contrast, were more nebulous and less obvious. They therefore required rehearsal and justification.¹⁶ This might explain why prescriptive books for gentlemen paid explicit attention to individuals' substantiating their claim to social superiority through virtuous demeanour, rather than legitimising their authority over women. None of the texts studied of the 'advice to son' genre advised a young man on how to distinguish himself from his mother, sister or wife. Each was rather concerned with cultivating the

¹³ See Bryson *From Courtesy to Civility*. pp.38-39

¹⁴ See S.D. Amussen "'The Part of a Christian Man': The Cultural Politics of Manhood in Early Modern England" in S.D. Amussen & M.A. Kishlansky (eds.) *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester 1995) p.214; J. Kamensky 'Talk Like a Man: Speech, Power and Masculinity in Early New England' *Gender and History* 8 (1996) p.30

¹⁵ Richard Brathwait *The English Gentlewoman* (London 1631; Amsterdam 1970)

¹⁶ Shapin *Social History of Truth*. p.88

manners and demeanour of a *gentleman*; that is, a male who displayed qualities befitting his social status.

We might infer, as Shapin does, that male/female difference simply went without saying. But it is clear from other sources that it was not seen as so innate as not to require articulation. Debates about the nature of women abounded in published texts, while the marital conduct books asserted scripturally-based male pre-eminence and female subordination, albeit within a framework of 'benign inequality' and with significant qualifications (see chapter eight).¹⁷ At least in the contexts of marriage, household and the family, writers were not confident that individuals - and, more to the point, women - knew their proper, gender-defined place, or could be trusted not to rebel. Rather than acquiescent and silent supporters of male supremacy, women were seen as the very opposite, fuelling much reiteration of the sexual hierarchy. The gentlemanly conduct books' lack of attention to women needs to be taken at face value, therefore; relations between men and women were not seen as the primary element in constructing masculinity. While notable in itself, this also signals that prescriptive literature contained different emphases, foils and reference points according to its purpose.

A complex array of qualities were claimed and promoted as masculine, while it emerges that male identities were heavily informed by the family and domestic setting, as well as public officeholding and vocation.¹⁸ Gentlemen had to be rational, cautious and moderate, loving to their family and friends and felicitous to their social inferiors. They had to display both self-control and social warmth; preserve their privacy, but be hospitable and affable; be learned and educated, but engage in recreational activity to

¹⁷ See for example Thomas Gataker *Marriage Duties Briefely Couched Together* (London 1626) pp.8,9; Matthew Griffith *Bethel: Or, A Forme for Families. In Which All Sorts of Both Sexes, are so Squared, and Framed by the Word of Food of God, as They May Best Serve in Their Severall Places, for Usefull Pieces in God's Building* (London 1633) pp.323-24

¹⁸ Hodgekin 'Thomas Whythorne and the Problems of Mastery'. pp.20-21; Fletcher 'Honour, reputation and local officeholding'. pp.92-115

maintain both physical and mental health; be moderate in diet; be attentive to, without being obsessive about, fashionable clothes; and cultivate skills of presentation, paying especial attention to their speech. Being a gentleman had to be learned; as George Puttenham advised, commendable speaking "commeth ... by arte and teaching, and by use and exercise" (see chapter five).¹⁹ The ideal, as allegedly achieved by William Cavendish, was a gentleman "courtly, civil, easy and free, without formality and constraint" while having "something of ... grandeur".²⁰

Early-modern masculinity cannot be read simply in terms of how it related to femininity. Neither can it be considered purely in terms of sex. Being a man did not mean an individual was regarded as masculine. Factors including age, social status, stage within the life-cycle, status and role within the family, and personal attributes shaped notions of what it was to be a 'real man'. The code imposed on young, nascent gentlemen was different from that conferred on their fathers (see chapter five). While it allowed greater freedom and attention to personal fulfilment, accepting that young men needed to engage in recreation and physical activity as an educative, character-forming process, it was more prescriptive and constraining, claiming that young males - just like their female counterparts - lacked the rationality, experience and plain good sense to be granted independent action or a public voice. In short, young men had to be prepared for their future, truly masculine role. They could not become proper men until they had matured, learned responsibility, achieved authority through public service, marriage and governance of a household. Masculinity was therefore inextricably bound up with patriarchy and position in the family. A true man was head of a household, or a *paterfamilias*, albeit one who governed with love and affection.

¹⁹ G.D. Willock & A. Walker (eds.) *The Arte of English Poesie by George Puttenham* (Cambridge 1936) pp.143-44

²⁰ Firth *Margaret Cavendish*. p.207

Family men

Historians have tended to underestimate or ignore the importance of families in the lives of men; hence, the frequent simplistic linking of the history of the family with women's history.²¹ Just as this has recently been challenged in relation to masculinity in the nineteenth century, a reading of texts suggests the family could be central to the identity of early-modern gentlemen.²² In part, this can be explained by the audience for whom they were written, for the family was perhaps of greater importance for those of higher social status: it gave them ballast and a reputation to maintain (see chapter two). Richard Brathwait found it difficult to separate advising gentlemen from counselling the family as a whole, expressing his hope *The English Gentleman* would be suitable for families, despite its named target audience.²³ Such a blurring of purpose might simply indicate Brathwait's presumption that men, as heads of families, epitomised their families; the two could not be separated because of a family's subjugation to its male head. But it also seems to suggest a perception of the family's central importance to a gentleman's identity, making the subjects on which Brathwait wished to advise gentlemen essentially those on which he would have advised their families more generally, and perhaps highlighting that 'family' and 'commonwealth' held pre-eminence over the individual. A gentleman was obliged to put his family first, although not before his duty to God; "He that provides not for his family is worse than an Infidell". A gentleman's primary function was to be his family's "master", "by releeving them outwardly with all necessaries, and inwardly with all good and wholsome instructions".²⁴

But the family had more than just corporeal, symbolic or pragmatic importance for gentlemen, and was more than about duty. Laing's notion of the internalised family, or "the

²¹ See H. Barker & E. Chalus (eds.) *Gender in Eighteenth-century England. Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (Harlow 1997) p.16

²² See M. Roper & J. Tosh (eds.) *Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London 1991) p.4 ; L. Davidoff & C. Hall *Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London 1987) p.13,32-33,450-51

²³ Brathwait *English Gentleman*. Preface 'To the Knowing Reader'

²⁴ Ibid. 'To the Knowing reader', p.154

family as fantasy", resonates with Sir John Bramston's and Gervase Holles' attachment to past, present and future generations of their families.²⁵ Sir John's autobiography forms an interesting balance between accounts of events in public and political life and developments within his own family. He identified life-patterns in different generations of his relatives, recording that he entered the Middle Temple, "the same inns of court where my father and his great-uncle Thomas ... had binn educated".²⁶ In a similar vein, Gervase Holles' *Memorials to the Holles Family* (dedicated to his son Freschville) shows a strong sense of familial attachment, and a keenness to draw parallels between the lives of different family members, as the following extract relating to the death of his wife illustrates:

and this parallel shee made to my mother; my mother brought my father 3 children, as shee did unto mee; my mother died in childbed of a daughter as shee did; the daughter died likewise as hers did; and my sonne was within sixe weekes olde as I was at the departure of my mother.²⁷

It can be inferred from this apparent comfort and pleasure in detecting similarities that Bramston and Holles had a strong emotional pride in their families. It was as though the replication of biographical details across generations confirmed the strength of their kinship ties.²⁸

Henry Newcome expressed "love and delight in the Conversation of little Children, among whom I have always found a most agreeable Diversion". That he did so suggests he perceived himself as unusual, even controversial (that he saw engaging with children as diversionary, rather than central to his activity, is also telling of the status he

²⁵ R.D. Laing 'The Family and the "Family"' in *The Politics of the Family and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth 1976) pp.3-18

²⁶ P. Braybrooke (ed.) *The Autobiography of Sir John Bramston K.B. of Skreens Park, in the Hundred of Chelmsford* (London 1845) pp.4,105

²⁷ A.C. Wood (ed.) *Gervase Holles. Memorials of the Holles Family, 1493-1656*. Camden Third Series Vol.IV (London 1937) p.231

²⁸ See C. Jackson (ed.) *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newtown, Co. York*. Surtees Society Vol.LXII (Durham 1873) pp.298-99 for a similar reference to patterns in experience

accorded them).²⁹ However, the evident joy and concern expressed in letters and diaries by fathers for their children indicates that Newcome was far from alone in being a man who treasured his children and who was ready to admit it. Dr. John Dee recorded in detail the various accidents that befell his children, including Arthur's falling "from the top of Watergate Stayres down to the fote from the top" on 3rd July 1582, Katherine's receiving a "blow on the eare given by her mother" on 1st May 1588, and Rowland's falling "into the Tems over hed and eares" on 5th August 1590. Just as meticulously, he recorded when his children were weaned and key stages of their education, demonstrating a strong fatherly concern for their welfare.³⁰

Holles included a eulogy in his memoirs on his son George, following the boy's death (the child was "buried in the same grave with my brother John and at the feet of my father" in August 1635) that displays a strong sense of his affection and pride, as well as his intense bereavement:

If a fond father is to trusted with the account of his owne childe, I may speake him of no ordinary expectation. He was as handsome and as well shaped as could be wished; at a yeare old he spoke plainly, and had so strange a memory that (before two yeares of his life passed) he could blazon any coat of armes ever in the canting termes of the Heralds, a thing hard to be credited ... I hope I shall be excused for saying so much of this little boy. He was borned my heyre, and this all his inheritance.³¹

The spirit in which Sir John Strode believed fatherhood should be conducted is made clear by the maxim he offered his son: "Be not ... a lion ... be a father".³² Similarly, Puttenham stated, "it is comely for a man to bee a lambe in the house and a Lyon in the field".³³ Advice that the inculcation of desirable attributes in the young should be achieved through

²⁹ Henry Newcome *The Compleat Mother, or an Earnest and Persuasive to All Mothers (Especially Those of Rank and Quality) to Nurse Their Own Children* (London 1695) pp.5-7

³⁰ J.O. Haliwell (ed.) *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee, and the Catalogue of his Library Manuscripts, from the Original Manuscripts* Camden Society Vol.19 (London 1842) pp.16,30-31,35, 8,55,21,31,23,60

³¹ Wood *Gervase Holles* pp.235-36; see B. Roberts 'Fatherhood in Eighteenth-century Holland: The Van der Muelen Brothers' *Journal of Family History* 21 (1996) p.224

³² Sir John Strode 'Advice to Son' in C. Aspinall-Oglander (ed.) *Numwell Symphony* (London 1945) p.53

³³ Willock & Walker *The Arte of English Poesie*. p.293

gentle, but firm, nurturing further indicates that a fatherly role was not seen as a dictatorial one (see chapters five and eight). This goes against Macdonald's assertion that Tudor and Stuart men were "cottage despots".³⁴

That the code of masculinity was fulfilled when a man married, governed a household and had children is evident from some gentlemen's accounts.³⁵ Holles recounted his evolution: as a single man, he had "only been indulgent to my owne contentment"; in marriage, he had found great solace, such that "I found no cause to envy any person living".³⁶ Isaac Archer was equally open about the effect marriage had had on him, seeing it as yet another stage in his reformation from reprobate to a worthy servant of God:

By marriage all my former youthfull desires were cured; and extravagant thoughts cleared. I found it a remedy; but cares came on mee, yet without distraction.³⁷

Once a father, Holles became mindful of the extent of his responsibilities, considering "what expedient might be best to make provision form them".³⁸

The combined impression is therefore gained that gentlemen invested strong emotion in their marriages and families, that their identities could be based heavily upon them, and that they experienced critical life changes within, and because of, them. The family was central to their life-cycle and experience, just as it was for women. But gentlemen did not just have a duty to their families. Sir John Strode reminded his son of his impending civic responsibilities, stating he was "not born for thyself alone, nor only for

³⁴ M. MacDonald *Mystical Bedlam. Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge 1981) p.98

³⁵ See F. Heal & C. Holmes *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (London 1994) p.283; Amussen "The part of a Christian man". p.216

³⁶ Wood *Gervase Holles* p.230

³⁷ M. Storey (ed.) *Two East Anglian Diaries 1641-1729. Isaac Archer and William Coe*. Suffolk Records Society Vol. XXXVI (Bury St. Edmunds 1994) p.117

³⁸ Wood *Gervase Holles* p.230

thy parents and friends". Rather, he had a duty to "King and country", while "he who prefers the care of his family, before the advancement of Gods glory, may seeme to be of Cardinall Bourbons minde".³⁹ Echoing such a calling, Margaret Cavendish proudly claimed that, her husband's affection for his family (she was referring to his first wife and sons) had never usurped that which he had held for the king.⁴⁰

Friendship was vitally important to a gentleman. Almost all the writers studied took care to explain how to secure and retain intimacy with a male companion. Such advice was partly pragmatic.⁴¹ A well-chosen friend offered the potential for personal and family gain. Sir John Oglander advised, in this "ambitious age", a man without a friend "shall be like a hop without a pole", and cynically counselled, "If thou shouldest bestow any great gift [on a friend] let it be some such thing as may be daily in his sight".⁴² Henry Peacham advised gentlemen to "hold friendship and acquaintance with few, and those I would with your betters, at the least of your owne ranke", and to ensure they never became indebted or "endear[d]" to anyone.⁴³ According to John Cleland, a trustworthy companion could bring "further and greater comfort in this vale of miserie".⁴⁴

A friend was not, however, simply for material gain. He was someone in whom to confide "the most inwarde griefes in your minde in time of sorrow" and with whom to share "pleasure ... in times of ioie".⁴⁵ For William Vaughan, friendships were truly cemented "in the time of triall", while Brathwait likened true friendship to a juniper tree that "affordeth the coolest shadow to refresh us, and the hottest coales ... to warm us". He

³⁹ Sir John Strode 'Advice to Son' in Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell Symphony*. p.51; Brathwait *English Gentleman*. Preface 'To the knowing Reader'

⁴⁰ Firth *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* p.245; see Heal & Holmes *The Gentry in England and Wales*. pp.276-77,282

⁴¹ See Stewart *Close Readers*. pp.xxxiii-xxxiv

⁴² Sir John Oglander 'Rules for a Happy Life' in Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell Symphony* p.49; see A. Bray & M. Rey 'The Body of the Friend: Continuity and Change in Male Friendship in the Seventeenth Century' in T. Hitchcock & M. Cohen (eds.) *English Masculinities 1660-1880* (London 1999) pp.65-84

⁴³ Henry Peacham *The Compleat Gentleman* (London 1622; Amsterdam 1968) p.187

⁴⁴ John Cleland *The Institution of a Young Noble Man* (Oxford 1607) p.196

⁴⁵ Cleland *Institution of a Young Noble Man* p.196

further advised, friendship was like "true love, mixed with a noble and heroick temper".⁴⁶ John Donne's friendship with Sir Henry Goodere seems to have epitomised such an emotional attachment:

It should be no interruption to your pleasures to hear me often say that I love you, and that you are as much my meditation as my self: I often compare not you and me, but the shear in which your resolutions are, and my wheel; both I hope concentrique to God; for me thinks that new Astronomie is thus applicable well, that we which are a little earth, should rather move towards God ...⁴⁷

On another occasion, Donne confessed to Sir Henry his loneliness in the midst of his family, although that he reported elsewhere on his extreme anxiety when his wife and children were ill suggests he invested deep emotion in them.⁴⁸ While civic responsibilities and duties to friends created additional dimensions and responsibilities for gentlemen, they did not undermine the family's importance to their identity and status.

Preserving masculinity

Once achieved, masculinity was not necessarily retained. It had to be nurtured and defended. Men's honour could be just as vulnerable as women's. Gervase Holles reflected on how his wife's father, John Kirkton, lived "neither unhandsomely nor unlike a gentleman". But "one dishonest act ... made all his life ... in most men's opinions, no better than a vayle of hypocrisy". Holles did not believe Kirkton had intended "to play the knave", but he was "uxorious" and had therefore been "overruled by his wife". While

⁴⁶ William Vaughan *The Golden-grove, Moralized in Three Bookes. A Worke Very Necessary for All Such, as Would Know how to Governe Themselves, Their Houses, or Their Countrey* 2nd edn (London 1608) 1st Bk. Ch.73; Brathwait *English Gentleman* pp.239,242

⁴⁷ Letter from John Donne to Sir Henry Goodere [undated] in J. Donne (ed.) *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour: Written by John Donne, Sometime Dean of St. Paul's London* (London 1651) p.61

⁴⁸ Letter from John Donne to Sir Henry Goodere [undated] in Donne *Letters to Severall Persons*. p.45; Letter from John Donne to Sir Henry Goodere, 10th August 1608 in E. Gosse (ed.) *The Life and Letters of John Donne*. Vol.I (London 1899) p.189

telling that the man's downfall was believed to be rooted in his wife's insubordination, the anecdote shows that a lapse in self-control could easily lead to loss of honour.⁴⁹

The notion of "anxious masculinities" has gained ground in thinking about men of the past, based on the premise that the dominant code of masculinity of a particular society was rendered precarious by potential, or perceived, opponents.⁵⁰ There were likely to have been several potential threats to early-modern gentle masculinity: women, whose subordination could not be depended on; men of lower social rank likely to engage in riotous and bawdy behaviour; young, nascent gentlemen, who might be disrespectful to their elders, let their fantastical minds run riot, and fall into effeminacy through inappropriate dress and activities; and mature gentlemen in name who might have felt their manliness and social status were challenged by adherence to the dominant code. To different degrees, individuals in each of these categories - non-men within a strict reading of the dominant code - might have been seen to endanger the masculinity defined by gentility and patriarchy.

The impression gained from advisory texts, however, is that anxiety about preserving masculinity centred primarily on the constant need to distinguish gentlemen from other men. A gentleman had to prove his social status and privileges were earned, not only through his parentage and wealth, but personal virtue. A sense of superiority was accompanied by a sense of obligation. More could legitimately be expected of a gentleman because more had been invested in him:

Now gentelman, yee whose Education hath engaged you fare in the expectance and opinion of others; yee whose more generous breeding promiseth more than others; ye whose nobler parts should distinguish you from others; let not those innate seeds of Gentilitie first sowne in you, as in a hopefull Seed-pot, be nipped in their raising: which that yee may the better prevent, exercise your selves in noble discourse, not wanton or

49 Wood *Gervase Holles*. pp.232-33

50 See for example, Amussen "The part of a Christian man". pp.215-17; M. Breitenberg *Anxious Masculinities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge 1996); B. Correll *The End of Conduct. 'Grobriarious' and the Renaissance Text of the Subject* (Ithaca 1996) pp.58-9

petulant, for these breed a dangerous corruption even in the life and conversation of man.⁵¹

Women were not seen as especially significant or threatening (in contrast, they were strongly significant in defining household order, as is addressed in chapter eight).⁵² But although other men formed an external threat, gentle masculinity was primarily endangered from within. Gentlemen could imperil their own code. Some of the writers began from the premise that the English male gentry did not display the qualities that they should (see chapter five), with eldest sons coming in for particular attack.⁵³ There was also a more pervasive, but less tangible, sense that gentleman needed constantly to be on their guard against personal weakness. They needed to beware falling short of the gentle code. Brathwait was explicit about the importance of constant reflection:

... enter your owne hearts, by a serious examination had every night, what you have done, or how you have imployed yourselves, and those Talents which God hath bestowed on you, the day past; in imitation of that blessed Father, who every night examined himselfe, calling his soule to strict account, after this manner ...⁵⁴

The purpose of such an exercise was to ask, "what hast thou done this day? What good hast thou omitted? what evill hast thou committed? what good, which thou shouldst have done? what evill which thos shouldst not have done?".⁵⁵ Angst about personal sinfulness that Larminie has found in the writings of Sir John Newdigate suggests that some gentlemen, at least, were attentive to the potential threat from within, and appealed to God to send them "chastity and charity, which are the united virtues of the soul".⁵⁶ Such contemplative practice relates heavily to puritan advice on maintaining a record or

51 Brathwait *English Gentleman* p.91; see also Mayer *Thomas Starkey*. p.53 on its being the destiny of some men to rule

52 See B. Correll *The End of Conduct*. p.76 for a contrary view

53 See Mayer *Thomas Starkey*. p.86

54 Brathwait *English Gentleman* p.162

55 Ibid. pp.162-63

56 Sir John Newdigate quoted in V.M. Larminie *The Godly Magistrate. The Private Philosophy and Public Life of Sir John Newdigate, 1571-1610*. Dugdale Society Occasional Papers (Oxford 1982) p.14; see also Storey *Two East Anglian Diaries*. pp.43-4 for Isaac Archer's explanation of the reason for his diary-keeping

account of personal activity that was not particularly gender-specific. However, it is clear that Christian teaching encompassed strong elements of self-reflection that were important to masculinity, as well as femininity.

Gentle masculinity was a code for mature, socially elite men that demanded a strict personal morality and inner strength, combined with a proper pedigree, and that related fundamentally to expressing and exercising patriarchy. As well as being delineated firmly by age and social status, it was defined by a gentleman's relationship with his family and friends, his contribution to civic society, and by a raft of personal qualities. It was specific as to who were its legitimate aspirants and adherents. Young gentlemen could only rehearse a nascent masculinity, nurturing their eventual maturation as truly masculine men (see chapter five). A key facet of the hegemonic masculinity was its very gentleness, in both senses of the word: it excluded those whose social rank precluded their pretending to have the attributes it required, and was based on a virtuous, moral and religious self.⁵⁷ Honour was the reward for displaying these inherited and learned elements. This resonated within the family as well as in the world outside, and was a key attribute looked for in prospective husbands (see chapters six and seven), as well as in those fit for civic duty.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See Ferguson *Articulate Citizen* p.189 for views about the dangers of an "indiscriminate" approach to education that did not respect social status

⁵⁸ See Edward Waterhouse *The Gentleman's Monitor: Or, a Sober Inspection into the Vertues, Vices, and Ordinary Means of the Rise and Decay of Men and Families* (London 1665) p.19

Chapter four

Inverted roles: female patriarchs?

Received rhetoric

Women of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries have tended to be seen as oppressed, subordinated and marginalised, destined by their sex to live a passive existence in which their activities were thoroughly prescribed - and proscribed - by men. They were the inferior foil to men's superiority, made so by the natural order, original sin, their inherent weakness and derivative ideology; a receptive silence to their menfolk's assertive voice; and encapsulated by the private world of the household, while their fathers, brothers and husbands reached out into the public spheres of business, court, vocation and print. Within contemporary anatomical thinking and Galenist theory, they were the physical inversion of men. On every level save spiritual, they were lesser.¹

But a much more varied picture of female experience is gained from surviving sources that offer insights into the lives of women who enjoyed gentle or noble status. Moreover, the prescriptive limits placed on female behaviour have to be seen in the context of a parallel concern to contain young men's activity, demeanour and speech to the extent, this thesis argues, that constraints upon men and women of the same social category were not markedly different (see chapters three and five).² This chapter explores facets of early-modern thinking on women, particularly around female expression and action. To be a gentle or noblewoman carried significant responsibilities and opportunities,

¹ For statements about female weakness see G. Edelen (ed.) *William Harrison 'The Description of England'* (New York 1968) p.38; Francis Osborne 'Advice to a Son, or Directions for your Better Conduct through the Various and Most Important Encounters in this Life' (Oxford 1656) in L.B. Wright (ed.) *Advice to a Son.. Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Francis Osborne* (Ithaca 1962) p.63; William Vaughan *The Golden-grove, moralized in three Bookes: A worke very necessary for all such, as would know how to governe themselves, their houses, or their countrey* 2nd edn (London 1608) 2nd Bk. Ch.7

² See C. King *Renaissance Women Patrons. Wives and Widows in Italy c.1300-1550* (Manchester 1998) pp.21-2 for a stress on men's receipt of advice, although King argues this was significantly different from that offered women; see A. Bryson *From Courtesy to Civility. Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford 1998) pp.38-39 for comments on the relatively few and narrow focus of prescriptions on female manners compared with those produced for their male counterparts.

manifested partly through the complex process of forging marriages. The extent of their role means that some women, particularly dowagers, can appropriately be seen as 'female patriarchs'.

Female expression

Women who wrote and were published sought to excuse their behaviour as a manifestation of transient or borrowed male characteristics. Aphra Behn referred to her "masculine part of the poetry in me".³ From this it can be inferred that gender-specific qualities were not regarded as sex-specific; so strongly was it believed that certain qualities belonged to one gender it was inconceivable they could be possessed by the other.⁴ Perhaps Behn could not perceive herself as a female writer. Her breaking the gendered code of feminine silence could only be explained in terms of her assuming a male persona. Such a notion is reinforced by Margaret Cavendish's reports that her published writings were presumed to have been those of a man; only her husband's verification of their true provenance quelled suspicion.⁵ Lucy Hutchinson purported to accept wholeheartedly inherent female inferiority, explaining women had "ignorance and weakness of judgement" compared with "the masculine understanding of men", and were "apt to entertain fancies". She appealed to women to "watch" themselves, beware their "own imbecility", and "lean by faith upon the strength of the Lord".⁶ Less contrite, Cavendish excused her work on the grounds that it was affected by the shortfalls in education she had suffered because of her sex. She was explicitly ambitious, though, about the effects she hoped her writings would have on her readers.⁷

³ Quoted in L. Pollock "'Teach Her to Live Under Obedience': The Making of Women in the Upper Ranks of Early Modern England" *Continuity and Change* 4 (1989) p.234

⁴ See Letter from Lord Conway to his daughter-in-law Ann Conway, 8 July 1651. BL Add.MS 23,213 f.9 in which he commented, since Ann wrote "like a man", she should not seal her "letters like a woman"

⁵ C.H. Firth (ed.) *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. The Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle, to which is added the true relation of my birth, breeding, and life* (London 1886) pp.xlviii, lvii

⁶ Lucy Hutchinson *Principles of the Christian Religion*, quoted in N.H. Keeble (ed.) *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Women* (London 1994) p.46

⁷ Margaret Cavendish 'Nature's Pictures, Drawn by Francis Pencil to the Life' (1656) Preface 'To the reader' transcribed in S. Trill, K. Chedzoy & M. Osborne (eds.) *Lay by Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen. Women Writing in England, 1500-1700* (London 1997) p.203; Firth *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*. p.xlix

Contemporary understandings of gender were neither as polarised nor as fixed as might be assumed. Like Cavendish, some eminent male writers believed differences between men and women were as much about established mores and practice as qualities intrinsic to each sex. Montaigne declared, "both male and female are cast in one same mould: instruction and custom excepted, there is no great difference between them", from which Keeble has inferred, "Nowhere does Michel de Montaigne's percipience more clearly distinguish him from his age".⁸ But Montaigne was not alone in espousing such a view, even if other writers did so less forcefully. Vives contended, "A man of himself is neither good nor evil" and that women were "reasonable creature[s]", who "with counsel may be altered and turned".⁹ Castiglione, Agrippa and Sir Thomas Elyot each argued that women had an equal capacity for reason as men, although did not conclude from this that women should assume public roles or publish.¹⁰ While there were many more examples of diatribes against women and expositions of female weakness, these messages did not go unchallenged by respected male thinkers. Views on inherent gender attributes also have to be seen in the context of an apparent shift in thinking towards accepting individuals, including women, were "produced" and could be "trained for different roles" (see chapter five).¹¹

Nevertheless, reading, writing and writing for publication were gendered activities, with the latter particularly going against the key female virtue of silence.¹² Women's reading and writing needed to be controlled. Although Vives conceded that women had the capacity for moral good, he marvelled at fathers and husbands who allowed their daughters

⁸ Quoted in Keeble *Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman*. p.ix

⁹ Vives 'The Duty of Husbands' (1529) in F. Watson (ed.) *Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women* (London 1912) pp.197-98

¹⁰ A. Shephard *Gender and Authority in Sixteenth-century England* (Keele 1994) pp.110-14; see also A. Marwick *Beauty in History. Society, Politics and Personal Appearance c.1500 to the Present* (London 1988) p.72

¹¹ A.R. Jones 'Nets and Bridles: Early Modern Conduct Books and Sixteenth-century Women's Lyrics' in N. Armstrong & L. Tennenhouse (eds.) *The Ideology of Conduct. Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality* (London 1987) pp.40-41

¹² See S. H. Mendelson *The Mental World of Stuart Women. Three Studies* (Brighton 1987) p.4

and wives "to read wantonness" and believed that, if women persisted in reading "poison" of "men's love and glossing words", they should be stopped from reading altogether.¹³ This highlighted a fundamental dilemma: literacy formed both a controlling and an empowering tool. Attitudes towards appropriate female activity centred on a wish to maintain social stability and a belief in feminine weakness and ultimate culpability. Reading could form, contain and influence individuals' thoughts, conduct and deeds. But unsuitable reading could put dangerous ideas into readers' heads, all the more risky when they were the heads of women.¹⁴

Female writers who published outside the acceptable female subjects of household management, child-rearing, religion and wifely obedience had to excuse and seek forgiveness for their male behaviour.¹⁵ This was done most often by referring to the inadequacy of what they had produced and emphasising their limited intended readership or the 'safeness' of their subject matter. In the dedicatory epistle to *The Mother's Legacie, to her unborne childe* (addressed to her husband), Elizabeth Jocelin stressed her work should withstand a child's judgement, was designed to provide "a foundation for better learning" and that her "intent was good".¹⁶ Cavendish more brashly asserted, "I could not suffer to be buried in silence", although added that her husband had been her "encourager and supporter".¹⁷

¹³ Vives 'Instruction of a Christian Woman' (1523) trans. R. Hyrde (1553) in Watson *Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women*. pp.56-62; see also Thomas Salter 'A Mirrhor Mete for all Mothers, Matrones and Maidens, Intituled the Mirrhor of Modestie' (1579) in Trill *et al. Lay by Your Needles Ladies*. p.47; see chapter ten

¹⁴ See K. Walker *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York 1996) p.15

¹⁵ See R. Martin (ed.) *Women Writers in Renaissance England* (Harlow 1997) p.5; M. Prior 'Conjugal Love and the Flight from Marriage: Poetry as a Source for the History of Women and the Family' in V. Fildes (ed.) *Women as Mothers in Pre-industrial England. Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London 1990) p.190; M.P. Hannay (ed.) *Silent but for the Word. Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works* (Ohio 1985) Introduction [p.1]; see A.B. Ferguson *The Articulate Citizen. and the English Renaissance* (Durham New Carolina 1965) p.158 on attitudes towards censorship of male-generated material; A. Pacheco (ed.) *Early Women Writers: 1600-1720* (London 1998) p.8

¹⁶ Elizabeth Jocelin *The Mothers Legacie, to her Unborne Childe* (London 1624) Dedicatory Epistle

¹⁷ Firth *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*. p.lvii

Women's apparent collusion with views on their weakness was not necessarily, or wholly, genuine. Cavendish defended *The World's Olio* (1655) on the grounds, "It cannot be expected I should write so wisely or wittily as men, being of the effeminate sex, whose braines Nature hath mixed with the coldest and softest elements".¹⁸ Such a direct reference to Galenist humoral theory might have been earnestly meant. But it seems tongue in cheek, forming part of the 'doublespeak' that permeated Cavendish's work.¹⁹ While accepting she had much to learn to catch up with educationally-advantaged men, she claimed to have been endowed "with a poetical and philosophical genius".²⁰ It was complicated for women to defend their actions through pursuing the very process for which they sought to be excused.²¹ They relied on various lines of defence: apologising for their actions by claiming the paltry quality of their offerings (the tactic favoured by Cavendish, even if she used it ironically); pretending to write themselves out of what they produced (chosen by Hutchinson); or undermining attacks against them by alluding to their very unnaturalness or even madness (the tack taken by Behn).²²

That early-modern women were discouraged from publishing their views has to be seen in the context of a general disdain for publication. A snobbery surrounded print, with those in court circles preferring to protect their musings in manuscript for a select audience. Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Philip Sidney, the Earl of Oxford and Henry Lord Paget were cited by George Puttenham in 1589 as "another crew of courtly makers, noblemen and gentlemen ... who have written excellently well, as it would appear if their doings

18 Quoted in Keeble *Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman*. p.47

19 See J. Fitzmaurice 'Fancy and the Family: Self-characterizations of Margaret Cavendish' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly. Studies in English and American Literature* 53 (1990) pp.198-209

20 Firth *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*. p.xlix

21 See N.H. Keeble "'The Colonel's Shadow': Lucy Hutchinson, Women's Writing and the Civil War' in T. Healy & J. Sawday (eds.) *Literature and the English Civil War* (Cambridge 1990) p.240; see also M. George *Women in the First Capitalist Society. Experiences in Seventeenth-century England* (Brighton 1988) p.21

22 See also Margaret Tyler *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood, Now Newly translated out of Spanish into our Vulgar English Tongue, by M.T.* (London 1578) [unpaginated]; Martin *Women Writers*. p.5

could be found out and made public with the rest".²³ But there seems also to have been a loosening of views on the propriety of women's publishing as the seventeenth century progressed, as well as a growing pressure on élite men to engage in, and promote, public discourse.²⁴ Nevertheless, women who wrote for other than practical purposes, or outside 'female subjects', consciously broke gender norms; hence, their apologies.

There was clearly a difference between writing to be published and writing as a practical, domestic skill. The latter was seen as desirable because it enabled women to participate in household management. Thomas Salter's ambivalent statements about the merits of women's reading and writing were sustained by the primary need for "every woman ... wholelie to be active and diligent about the government of her householde and familie".²⁵ Martin Billingsley stated it was "necessary" and "excellent" for women to write, especially for widows who were left to manage an estate. If women could not look after their own affairs, they might fall victim to "the manifold deceits now used in the world", their vulnerability jeopardising the wider and longer-term interests of their families.²⁶ Billingsley's promotion of feminine literacy was tainted with a belief in female inferiority, however; he believed that girls and women should be taught the Roman hand because it was the easiest to learn.²⁷ Some advisers on letter-writing specifically addressed the needs of women (for example, Jacques Du Bosque's *The Secretary of Ladies* published in England in 1638), while there were many highly competent female letter-writers who acted as vital mediators and instigators within family business.²⁸ Indeed, women's ability to express themselves in writing was crucial to their roles.

²³ George Puttenham *Art of English Poesie* (1589) quoted in R. Nye *A Choice of Sir Walter Raleigh's Verse* (London 1972) p.11

²⁴ R. Dutton (ed.) *Sir Philip Sidney. Selected Writings* (Manchester 1987) p.15; see also M.J.M. Ezell *The Patriarch's Wife. Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill 1987) p.82,64ff; Mendelson *Mental Worlds*. pp.190-92; Ferguson *The Articulate Citizen*. pp.133, 147

²⁵ Salter 'A Mirrhoe Mete for all Mothers' in Trill *et al. Lay by your Needles Ladies*. p.46

²⁶ Martin Billingsley *The Pens Excellencie* (London 1618; Amsterdam 1977) p.C2

²⁷ Ibid. p.C4

²⁸ See J. Robertson *The Art of Letter Writing. An Essay on the Handbooks Published in England During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. (London 1942) pp.59-60

Family, life-cycle and female power: Lady Jane Cornwallis and her circle

Becoming a wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, grand-aunt or widow all influenced women's relationships within their family and the authority they enjoyed within and beyond it. In particular, it affected their role in marriage formation. This is amply illustrated by Lady Jane Cornwallis, even if her efforts to control whom her son wed were ultimately frustrated. The collection of letters published in the nineteenth century mainly comprises missives to the gentlewoman, together with a small number written by herself.²⁹ Lady Jane set the terms of her second marriage to Nathaniel Bacon in 1614, a large inheritance from her first husband, Sir William Cornwallis, placing her in a strong bargaining position. In addition to lands already held in North Yorkshire, she became entitled to profits from the manors of Brome, Oakley, Stuston, Thrandeston and Pelgrave on her husband's death.³⁰

Once Nathaniel had made his addresses to Lady Jane, his mother took principal responsibility for brokering the settlement. The only male involvement appears to have been a few further tentative letters of courtship from Nathaniel and from Mr. Eluathan Parr, rector of Pelgrave, who acted as an intermediary for Lady Jane.³¹ In a letter to Mr. Parr in 1613, Lady Jane reiterated her wish that he should give "no incoregement to the gentleman to prosede" with marriage negotiations, "as I toulde you then, I saye now, that since Sir Willem Cornwaleys's death, I neaver as yet had a thought of changing the course of life which I now lede". A similar determination to remain a widow was expressed by Lady Anne Newdigate, Katherine Austin and Martha Moulsworth, while John Hoskyns advised his wife, Benedicta: "Yf you desire a sole supremacy marry no more when I am dead".³² Lady Jane's resolve was evidently less strong than some of her peers. Although

²⁹ R. Griffin, Lord Braybrooke (ed.) *The Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis, 1613-44, From the Originals in the Possession of the Family* (London 1842)

³⁰ Ibid. p.x

³¹ Ibid. pp.x,1-22 passim

³² D. Nutt (ed.) *Gossip from a Muniment Room, being Passages in the Lives of Anne and Mary Fitton*,

ambivalent about remarriage, she ceded the future direction of her life to God's will and acknowledged, rather coyly, that since Nathaniel Bacon was "so desierous to see me ... it were uncivell part of me to forbid him coming".³³ In a further letter to Mr. Parr, she reflected on the difficulty of discerning whether her suitor - and his family - had a genuine interest in her, or whether they were simply attracted by her wealth:

... they have made it seeme other wayes to me, in assuering me that it was myselfe, and not my fortune, which they desiered; but, I confess, by severall circumstances I maye justly feare that I shall find my fortunes to be the chiefe motive which hath persuaded them to this; besides which, if I doe, yet it will much discourage me for persevering any further in it.³⁴

Walker has suggested that the way Cornwallis negotiated the terms of her second marriage was redolent of the advice of the marital conduct book writers on female subordination.³⁵ But this seems unfounded. Lady Jane had the freedom to bargain with the Bacon family, with the fallback that she could remain a widow if she wished. This contradicts the qualified female passivity that the conduct books extolled (see chapter eight). Moreover, her unassertive manner was perhaps deliberate, reflecting a common keenness to maintain good relations regardless of the outcome of negotiations (see chapter seven). Walker makes no direct reference to any of the conduct books, while none of the books even entertained the idea of women's involvement in marriage talks, making it difficult to judge how far Lady Jane's approach was in keeping with published advice. On the surface, however, the correlation seems negligible.

What is clear, however, is that many women played key roles in forging marriages. When it came to searching for a wife for her nineteen-year-old son Frederick, Lady Jane Cornwallis drew on a network of senior female figures. Dorothe Randolph, a close friend

1574 to 1618 2nd edn (London 1898) p.117ff; Katherine Austen's Miscellanies, BL Add.MS 4454 ff.95,96; R.C. Evans & B. Wiedemann (eds.) *"My Name was Martha". A Renaissance Woman's Autobiographical Poem* (Connecticut 1993) p.8; L.B. Osborn (ed.) *The Life, Letters and Writings of John Hoskyns, 1566-1638* (New Haven 1937) p.81

³³ *Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis*. pp.1,2

³⁴ *Ibid.* p.2

³⁵ Walker *Women Writers*. pp.31-33

and distant relation, undertook the groundwork, using contacts to identify possible matches. In a letter written at some point in 1629, Dorothe reported on a meeting she had had with Mr. Chilting to discuss the suitability of Sir Thomas Barrington's niece as a wife for Frederick. The woman in question might have been Joan Meux, daughter of the widowed Sir William Meux, since it is apparent from letters exchanged at this time within the Barrington family that a match was being keenly sought for her (see chapter six). Mr. Chilting had thought a portion of £7000 might be offered with the young woman, but had been unable to confirm this. Dorothy Randolph had subsequently met with Lady Judith Barrington, Sir Thomas' wife, in London. Lady Judith had expressed a readiness to provide Lady Jane with details of her niece if she wished to pursue the match further. Lady Judith had also voiced pleasure at the prospect "that any that had relation to her might be so happy as to come under your [Lady Jane's] government".³⁶ This assumption that Frederick Bacon's eventual wife would become subject to the ultimate authority of her mother-in-law is striking; that it was uttered by one woman and communicated by another gives a sense that matriarchal power could control marriage formation and inter-family relationships to a significant degree.

Lady Judith Barrington had confirmed that her niece's portion would comprise "one thousand pounds in money and a hundred pounds a year land in inheritans", valued at approximately £5000. Dorothe Randolph had felt sure Lady Jane "would not aksept of soe small a portion with any body" and would "rather have money than land" (presumably because of the substantial estates already held by her family). Although unable to verify this as Lady Jane's firm view, Dorothe had made Lady Judith aware of the strong unlikelihood of the match proceeding.³⁷ Although unable to come to an agreement with the Barrington family, Dorothe Randolph's time with Lady Judith was not wasted. At some point, the women had been joined by a former Dutch merchant, Sir William Curteen, and two of his daughters. Dorothe had thought one of the young women would make a suitable

³⁶ *Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis*. p.208

³⁷ *Ibid.* p.208

wife for Frederick, providing that her family could offer a portion of £10,000. Lady Barrington had assured Dorothe of the Curteen family's wealth, and had speculated that Sir William would be willing to offer a portion of more than the required amount "if he liked the conditions". Subject to Lady Jane Bacon's approval, Lady Judith had agreed to use her "power" and "best endeavours" to promote the match.³⁸ In a subsequent letter (dated 1st December 1629), Dorothe Randolph repeated Lady Judith's assurance to provide "the best servis" that she could.³⁹ Such a gesture seems particularly magnanimous given the prospect of matching Frederick with her own niece had only recently been rejected. But it appears to have been in keeping with the pragmatic approach to marriage formation that many families and individuals adopted (see chapter six).

Apparently not confident that a match would be reached, Dorothe Randolph continued to look for other possible wives for Frederick. Her searching unearthed no one of particular promise, except a young woman "of the nobility". While she understood that Lady Jane Bacon did not want "to match with them", she felt the "com[m]ended" match with a daughter of John, Earl of Bridgewater, President of Wales, was too tempting to ignore and therefore sought Lady Jane's permission to pursue it.⁴⁰ Seemingly this was not granted (or else the Earl of Bridgewater was not keen), since no further reference is made to the matter. It is noteworthy that Lady Jane was reluctant to marry her son into the nobility. Inter-marriage between the gentry and nobility was quite common in the first half the seventeenth century and many gentry families are likely to have leaped at the chance to gain a foothold into the nobility through marriage.⁴¹ Perhaps Lady Jane did not want to marry her son into a family of higher social status because she was afraid that it would threaten the authority she so obviously enjoyed.⁴²

38 Ibid. p.209

39 Ibid. p.221

40 Ibid. p.213

41 L. Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford 1966) pp.285-87

42 See E. McClure Thompson (ed.) *The Chamberlain Letters. A Selection of Letters of John Chamberlain Concerning Life from 1597 to 1626* (London 1965) p.97 for a similar example relating to Sir Henry Savile's "obstinate resolution not to match with nobility"

Subsequent letters from Lady Judith Barrington and Dorothe Randolph to Lady Jane Bacon indicate the wisdom of not negotiating exclusively with Sir William Curteen. It transpired he was disinclined to marry off any of his daughters until his son had returned to England with news of how he had fared through the death of his brother. Rumours were circulating that he was set to gain "forty or fifty thousand pounds". If this was the case, he would "looke very hie for his daughters" (presumably to the nobility). Within such a scenario, a match with Frederick Bacon would become distinctly unattractive. Nonetheless, Dorothe stressed to Lady Jane the "many thanks" he had given Lady Judith Barrington for raising the possibility of a match with the young man, and had "not at all refues[ed]" the prospect out of hand. This suggests Sir William's keenness not to sour relations or lose the opportunity to return to negotiations if his inheritance proved less than he hoped. Dorothe, however, thought the possibility of Sir William's agreeing to the marriage to be so slight as not to be worth Lady Jane's "further expectation".⁴³

Evidently anxious to see things resolved one way or another, Dorothe confided that she "ernestly desire[d] to se him [Frederick] maried". She had detected a "wandring humor in him" and "a resolution this spring to goe into France, yet not without leave". She urged Lady Jane not to delay marrying off her son by being too choosy, stressing, "it is hard to meet with one whose person and portion is without exseption".⁴⁴ The impression is gained, therefore, of Dorothe's keenness to curb the young man's wayward spirit through marriage. Such a sentiment seems to have been quite common. In a letter written to her son Edward, Lady Brilliana Harley expressed her regret "such yonge men should marry". She reflected some were in need of the constraint and support that marriage supplied; it was a "pitty", but some young men had "a need for a nurs or a guide, call them what you pleas".⁴⁵ This view of the role of a wife is interesting when compared with the rhetoric of the marital

43 *Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis*. p.226

44 *Ibid.* pp.225,226

45 T. Taylor Lewis (ed.) *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, Wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath*. Camden Society (London 1854) pp.62-63

conduct books (see chapter eight), but affirms views on young gentleman's vulnerability to temptation (see chapter five).

Dorothe and Lady Judith Barrington lost no time searching for other possible matches for Frederick. Deferring action on one until she had received sanction to proceed from Lady Jane, Dorothe reported she had heard of "a very pretty gentillwoman that hath six hundred pounds a year, and her father and mother dead". These distinct bonuses were offset by the young woman's having to pay £1800 of her inheritance to her "grandmother for her wardship". However, Dorothe felt "ther might be meanes found to propound" this disadvantage. Further, she reported that her husband, Ambrose, had visited the young woman and "commends her very handsome, and sixteen years old".⁴⁶

With the assistance of female friends, Lady Jane Cornwallis took responsibility for finding a match for her son. Apart from some initial investigative work, men appeared to have played no part, while Frederick seems not to have been consulted at all about whom he might marry. This might have contributed to his upsetting his mother's plans by forging a match independently with a lady at court, Elizabeth Ashburnham. Deeply repentant of such an insubordinate act, Frederick described himself in a letter to Lady Jane as "the worst of children to the best of mothers". He protested, however, that he had married Elizabeth at the

commands of the King and Queene, whoo had appointed the time at mie last beeing in the countrie, it not being in my power to alter it, especially at that time both of them beeing pleased to express their favor so farre as to give us a £1000 for ievells, and £2000 in monie.

Frederick expressed his own and his new wife's willingness to give all the bounty to Lady Jane and to "bee holie at your La[dyshi]pp's disposing".⁴⁷ Despite this humility and the

⁴⁶ *Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis* p.227

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.230; see Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. p.278 on the trend for royal intervention in marriage formation

seemingly robust excuse of having acted in accordance with royal decree, Lady Jane was reluctant to forgive him. Her new daughter-in-law wrote to inform her that if Frederick did not regain his mother's love, "hee will never ioye in anything ether hee dooth ore shall posses". Charles I and Henrietta Maria also intervened, the King trying to allay Lady Jane's anger by highlighting the grandeur of Frederick's wedding - it having taken place in the "royall presence" and "in a place where none have accesse but such as the Kinge purposeth to hono[u]r" - and the Queen appealing to Lady Jane "to look upon him [Frederick] with the eye of a mother". In a subsequent letter, she asked her to "extend the same kindness to your daughter in law, and so receive them both into yo[u]r motherly care".⁴⁸ Use of "mother" and "motherly" in this way is telling about the connotations with which the terms were conventionally imbued.⁴⁹ After Ambrose and Dorothe Randolph undertook further conciliatory work, it seems that relations between Lady Jane and her son and daughter-in-law were eventually restored.

Apart from passing reference to prospective wives' physical attractiveness, the women's criterion for deciding on a potentially suitable match seems to have been the financial benefits it would bring. Lady Jane Cornwallis was not even concerned to make a match that would advantage her family socially, and seems not to have been provided with information that would have allowed her to judge the suitability of particular women for her son in terms of their character or religious persuasion. Such a cold approach was probably quite rare (see chapters six and eight to ten). Moreover, it seems ironic in light of Lady Jane's earlier concern that Nathaniel Bacon and his parents were only intent on pursuing her because of her handsome fortune. It is perhaps rash, however, to jump to conclusions. Factors other than money might have become more significant had negotiations for a particular match for Frederick progressed further. Whether a possible marriage was acceptable in financial terms formed the starting-point for

48 *Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis*. pp.232,234,236,237

49 See chapter three for a similar use of "father"

discussing other factors. For some families, however, factors other than money were accorded much greater priority.

Lady Jane Cornwallis might have taken responsibility for finding a wife for Frederick because his father, Sir William Cornwallis, was dead and she was his appointed guardian. It was perhaps not thought appropriate that the young man's step-father should assume a role in the matter. At the same time, Lady Jane's control of the matter could simply have reflected her dominance within the marriage, predicated on the substantial wealth she brought to the partnership and the respective personalities of her and her husband.⁵⁰ However, a wider consideration of women's roles belies any notion that Lady Jane was unusual in the authority she wielded.

Female control

It fell to the Countess of Warwick to arrange marriages for each of her three orphaned nieces following the death of her husband in 1673. Preliminary negotiations for a match for Mary to Henry St. John had been undertaken by the Earl of Warwick before his death. Thereafter, the Countess of Warwick "finished" the arrangements "much to my satisfaction". She went on to secure matches for Anne and Essex, and gave thanks to God "for letting me have the long-desired satisfaction of seeing" her orphaned nieces "left to my care ... married to three young persons who are free from the reigning vices of these loose and profane times".⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis*. pp.ix,xv

⁵¹ T. Crofton Croker (ed.) *The Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick*. (London 1848) pp.34-36; see also J.M. Mowmen (ed.) *Letters of Lady Rachel Russell, from the Manuscript in the Library at Woburn Abbey* 8th edn (London 1820) p.lii; C. Jackson (ed.) *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newtown, Co. York* Surtees Society Vol.LXII (Durham 1873) pp.76, 79,81,289

The Barrington family correspondence provides insights into the division of responsibilities for estate management and family business.⁵² Lady Judith Barrington was regarded by her second husband, Sir Thomas, as a valuable, albeit subsidiary, agent in business negotiations. Explaining why she could not be with her mother-in-law at Hatfield Broadoak as she had hoped, Lady Judith wrote, Sir Thomas "thinks my being at Hand to speak with the Lady Holland sometime may advantage him much".⁵³ That women could be useful mediators seems to have gained currency during the seventeenth century, the circumstances created by the civil war giving them opportunities for action previously denied them.⁵⁴ Sir Ralph Verney perceived the advantages to be gained of his wife's involvement in settling his estates while he had to remain in France, stating, "women are not the worse sollicitors, their sex entitles them to many privileges".⁵⁵ It seems likely, therefore, that both Sir Thomas Barrington and Sir Ralph Verney welcomed the involvement of their wives not simply because of a confidence in their innate negotiating skills, but because they thought a greater sympathy was shown towards women. Being able to rely on capable women could therefore facilitate securing agreements and settlements on generous terms.

But female family members did not only act as their husbands' agents. Sir Thomas Barrington's duties as a Member of Parliament and champion of the parliamentarians' cause enabled Lady Judith to exert substantial influence over estate business. By virtue of her first marriage, she also held lands in her own right to which

⁵² See also A. Wall (ed.) *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575-1611* Wiltshire Record Society (Devizes 1983) pp.29-32; Joyce Jeffreys Account Book. BL Egerton MS 3054 for similar examples of women's roles in estate business; Letters between Sir Nicholas Carew to his sister Lady Raleigh regarding her settling of estate bills, 8 July 1629 & undated, BL Add.MS 29,599 f.34

⁵³ Letter from Lady Judith Barrington to Lady Joan Barrington, undated. BL Egerton MS 2646, f.30

⁵⁴ See P. Higgins 'The Reactions of Women, with Special Reference to Women Petitioners' in B. Manning (ed.) *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War* (London 1973) pp.219-22; H. Smith *Reason's Disciples. Seventeenth-century English Feminists* (Urbana 1982) p.59 for claims that the Civil War provided a "catalyst" to women's questioning their status, education and roles

⁵⁵ Quoted in M. Slater *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century. The Verneys of Claydon House* (London 1984) p.66

she had to attend. Her letters to John Kendal, the Barrington family's chief servant, indicate a substantial amount of her time was spent in managing the Annales estate in Hertfordshire, while her correspondence with Thomas Saunders, another family agent, regarding the settlement of a land agreement displays her prowess in dealing with matters firmly and efficiently:

... my onely aime is to settle my Sonnes estates soe as I may give him an other day a good account; for the effecting whereof in your Tythes, I am to regard 2 things first, the gaining of a lawfull waye, by right, & not upon curtesie, and next if I lett lease of itt for 21 yeares, I doe stand upon £30 Rent yearly ... what I am putt upon now is upon necessity; but I could have wished I might have mett with more assurances that your deeds had tended to a more curteous waye ...⁵⁶

Lady Judith's letters to her husband during the civil war indicate that she played a further role in relaying important information to him that could help him in his decision-making. She directed him on tactical matters, indicating not only that she possessed a detailed knowledge of events, but that she expected her husband to heed her advice:

S[ir] do you remember to give warning unto your nephew Masham to have his Troope of Hors in readiness instantly.

S[ir] give me leave to put you in minde of thinking to secure Ware River, from passage yt way: as well as by Royston.⁵⁷

In the same letter, Lady Judith urged Sir Thomas to send the family's coach back to Hatfield Broadoak, reasoning, "your being but one; & having good Horses to Ride on, you can thear make better shift w[i]thout a Coach then we can doe heer".⁵⁸ While the tone of Lady Judith's letters suggests she was used to exerting influence over her husband, her power within her family increased after Sir Thomas died in 1644. Such an attainment of

⁵⁶ Letter from Lady Judith Smith to Thomas Saunders, 12 August 1632. BL Egerton MS 2646, f.40

⁵⁷ Letter from Lady Judith Barrington to Sir Thomas Barrington, 18 October 1643. BL Egerton MS 2647, f.348

⁵⁸ Ibid. f.348

authority as the family's dowager mirrored the experience of her mother-in-law, Lady Joan, but was not without problems (see chapter two).

Gender interacted with the relative age of individuals and their position in their own life-cycle and that of their family. Religious doctrine and concepts of hierarchy were also significant for individuals' authority. Belief in an implicit natural order was firmly entrenched, with the notion of pure equality anathema.⁵⁹ A complex structure of interlocking ideas dictated that men had authority over women. However, a pragmatic view was taken on how men and women should conduct their lives together and what should happen if a husband died before his wife.⁶⁰ Although cultural legacies and contemporary thinking focused strongly on women's inferiority to men and their naturally subordinate position, the objective was not simply to maintain male supremacy, but to preserve the social order. The family formed a key arena in which this could be done (see chapter eight). However, power relationships between the sexes needed to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate expedient female action and assertion.⁶¹ Moreover, while women were seen within rhetoric as weak, they still had to carry out important duties.⁶²

⁵⁹ J.A. Sharpe *Early Modern England. A Social History, 1550-1760* 2nd edn. (London 1997) pp.118-19; L. Woodbridge *Women and the English Renaissance* (Brighton 1984) p.130; see T.F. Mayer (ed.) *Thomas Starkey. A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*. Camden 4th Series, Vol.37 (London 1989) p.53 for statements about the natural order

⁶⁰ See J.D. Marshall (ed.) *The Autobiography of William Stout 1665-1752* (Manchester 1967) p.75 for a description of arrangements made for Stout's widowed mother to manage "her own affairs", including the family estate; see B.A. Holderness 'Widows in Pre-Industrial Society: An Essay upon their Economic Functions' in R.M. Smith (ed.) *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge 1984) pp.425-27 on the active, and accepted, role of women

⁶¹ For examples of women's active deployment of skills, see P. Braybrooke (ed.) *The Autobiography of Sir John Bramston, K.B. of Skreens, in the Hundred of Chelmsford* Camden Society (London 1845) pp.19,380; *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, Governor of Nottingham Castle and Town ... written by his widow Lucy* (London 1806) p.24; F. Bamford (ed.) *A Royalist's Notebook - The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander Kt. of Nunwell* (London 1936) pp.103,170,241; *Or, a Publication of divers Petitions presented by Mistris Love to the Parliament, on behalf of her Husband, With Severall Letters that interchangeably pass'd between them a little before his Death* (London 1664) passim; Crofton Croker *Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick*. p.37; Jackson *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton*. p.106; R.H. Saunders (ed.) *The Official Papers of Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, Norfolk as Justice of the Peace, 1580-1620* (London 1915) pp.199-200

⁶² L.A. Pollock "'Teach Her to Live Under Obedience': The Making of Women in the Upper Ranks of Early Modern England' *Continuity and Change* 4 (1989) pp.231-58; John Featley *A Fountaines Teares Emptying it Selfe into Three Rivulets, vis of 1. Compunction, 2. Compassion, 3. Devotion. Or Sobs of Nature Sanctified by Grace* (Amsterdam 1646) p.287

Women's role in marriage formation provides an interesting example of female authority co-existing with formal male dominance.⁶³ Their assuming control in this important area seems not to have been seen as a threat or as subversive, either by women themselves or by their menfolk. We have perhaps been unduly influenced by the Victorian notion of femininity, epitomised in woman as ornament and of social status being manifested in female idleness.⁶⁴ But in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, such a representation and expression of ideal of femininity had little currency. Rather, women undertook roles that could have equally been undertaken by their male social counterparts. They were expected also to possess the skills to manage a household, educate their children, and attend to the health needs of their household and social circle.⁶⁵ That women could, and did, exert considerable control over family matters, but were effectively denied a voice in wider society, shows the need to attend to fluid power relationships and individuals' varying degrees of authority in different hierarchical constructs and social constellations and at different life stages.⁶⁶

The case of Lady Jane Cornwallis shows how convention, wealth, family composition, social status and personal qualities could all affect the authority individuals enjoyed; sex and concepts of gender roles were not the only determining factors. Women's involvement in marriage formation shows the 'gaps' in male dominance. But their participation appears not to have been questioned or even regarded as a regrettable contingency, suggesting that notions of pure patriarchy did not exist. Rather, its

⁶³ See S. Kettering 'The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen' *The Historical Journal* 32 (1989) pp.817-41; see also B. Capp 'Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.) *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London 1996) pp.118-120; J. Hardwick *The Practice of Patriarchy. Gender and Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (Pennsylvania 1998) pp.226-27

⁶⁴ See D. Gorham *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London 1982) p.27

⁶⁵ See also D. Bornstein *The Lady in the Tower. Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women*. (Connecticut 1983) p.47

⁶⁶ See J.A. Sharpe 'Disruption in a Well-ordered Household' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.) *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London 1996) pp.187-212

conventions were practised - and were expected to be practised - flexibly. Women could exercise substantial power when it was in their families' interests, acting on significant issues without being seen to subvert either familial order or that of wider society. Preserving and promoting a family's interests were greater priorities than adhering to the sexual hierarchy and its cultural ramifications (see chapter eight). Senior female figures could therefore wield substantial influence and authority within, and on behalf of, their families. In this sense, gentlewomen could act as matriarchs. Because their roles were not noticeably different from that of men in this context, it is perhaps appropriate to see them as female patriarchs.

Chapter five

Gendering individuals: preparing children for adulthood

Accident or purposeful prescription?

Fletcher has proposed that masculinity was "thrust" on male youths, their having to glean scraps of guidance on being a man from "watching plays and listening to ballads sung in the market place and observing and listening to their elders".¹ By implication, acquiring the qualities described in chapter three was essentially left to chance. However, a very different impression is gained of how high-born males were prepared for their adult roles from the prescriptive literature written for a general (literate) audience, individual fathers' advice to their sons, and advice offered by other relatives who acted in fatherly roles. Such material belies any notion that creating 'proper' men was a haphazard process. Rather, it suggests careful and close attention was paid to grooming gentle male youths for their future role of mastery. Moreover, the family and household (although not necessarily the household into which an individual had been born; see chapter two) were given centre-stage in preparing young gentlemen for adulthood, rather than events, mores, culture and individuals *outside* these institutions. This chapter explores the advice particularly offered to young gentlemen, together with the pragmatic approach taken to preparing children for adult roles in the context of gender and sibling hierarchy.

If the quantity of prescriptive literature is indicative of contemporary attitudes and concerns, then being a gentleman was not seen as something that came naturally to men by virtue of their sex and social status. Instead, detailed advice was deemed to be needed and, indeed, was given.² Becoming truly masculine had to be learned through rigorous and lengthy academic, moral and religious education and training. Individuals were believed to be malleable and susceptible to educative forces and to possess a strong self-will and

¹ A. Fletcher *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven 1995) pp.87-88,105

² See Amussen 'The part of a Christian man': the cultural politics of manhood in early modern England' in S.D. Amussen & M.A. Kishlansky (eds.) *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester 1995) p.214; J. Kamensky 'Talk like a Man: Speech, Power and Masculinity in Early New England' *Gender and History* 8 (1996) p.28

capacity to change. In turn, a strong faith (following the teachings of Erasmus) was placed in a liberal education's ability to meld the young into socially responsible individuals.³ With appropriate counsel from their elders - rather, than the more informal and less controllable "watching and listening" suggested by Fletcher - young, or nascent, gentlemen could forge an acceptable character and identity. That, at least, was the hope.

Contemporary fears that England was failing to prepare high-born male youths adequately for their adult role go some way to explaining the publication of a large numbers of prescriptive treatises on gentlemanly conduct.⁴ Henry Peacham was motivated to write *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622) by accusations from abroad that English gentlemen were brought up "neither to any qualitie to preferre them" nor to have "the Latine tongue to help themselves withall". In short, they had a "backwardnesse and rawnesse" compared with their continental peers.⁵ In Richard Brathwait's words, a "depraved effeminacie", "vanity" and "misery" had gripped the "Gentry of this age". He hoped to exert a positive influence and help young gentlemen navigate "the mazie labyrinth of this life".⁶ Roger Ascham began from a similar premise in writing *The Schoolmaster* "for the private bringing-up of youth in gentlemen's and noblemen's houses".⁷ He attacked the pride "some young gentlemen of ours" derived from a lack of learning and advocated they be "brought up in good order of living and in some more severe discipline" than he believed to be common.⁸ Citing "the old noble Persians" as worthy of emulation, Ascham believed a young gentleman should "never [be] free to go

³ See A.R. Jones 'Nets and Bridles: Early Modern Conduct Books and Sixteenth-century Women's Lyrics' in N. Armstrong & L. Tennenhouse (eds.) *The Ideology of Conduct. Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality* (London 1987) pp.39-72; A.B. Ferguson *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham, North Carolina 1965) p.185; K. Thomas *Man and the Natural World. Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (London 1984) pp.41-45; W.H. Woodward *Desiderius Erasmus concerning the Aims and Method of Education* (Cambridge 1904) pp.73-5,83

⁴ See T.F. Mayer (ed.) *Thomas Starkey. A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* Camden Fourth Series, Vol.37 (London 1989) p.86; Ferguson *Articulate Citizen* p.185

⁵ Henry Peacham *The Compleat Gentleman* (London 1622) 'Preface to Reader'

⁶ Richard Brathwait *The English Gentleman* (London 1630; Amsterdam 1975) Preface 'To the Knowing Reader' pp.26-27

⁷ L.V. Ryan (ed.) *Roger Ascham. The Schoolmaster* (London 1570; Ithaca 1967) [p1]

⁸ Ryan *Ascham. The Schoolmaster*. pp.38,49

where he would and do what he list himself", but should be guided by "some grave governor, until he was either married or called to bear some office in the commonwealth".⁹

Ascham claimed that discipline in England had slipped to such an extent "even very girls, dare without all fear" to be independent and youths were choosing their marriage partner "in spite of father, mother, God, good order and all". Such unwelcome liberty and insubordination Ascham attributed to a lackadaisical attitude to parental control just when the young needed greatest guidance. In consequence, they had a "license to live as they lust themselves" with serious repercussions:

... if we suffer the eye of a young gentleman once to be entangled with vain sights, and the ear to be corrupted with fond and filthy talk, the mind shall quickly fall sick and soon vomit and cast up all wholesome doctrine that he received in childhood ... once unglutted with vanity he will straightway loathe all learning and good counsel to the same ... the parents, for all their great cost and charge, reap only in the end the fruit of grief and care.¹⁰

Although parents were likely to be strong disciplinarians when their sons were aged between seven and seventeen, "from seventeen to seven-and-twenty (the most dangerous time of all a man's life and most slippery to stay well in)", youths had "commonly the rein of all license in their own land, and specially such as to live in the court". Fathers were usually attentive to ensuring their sons were under the tutelage of good teacher but failed to weed "from their children ill things and ill company". The young needed also to retain "some ignorance" to preserve "simplicity" and "innocency"; too much knowledge could be dangerous both for young men and women (see chapter four).¹¹

Belief in the malleability of youth was accompanied by a concern about its tendency towards corruption. Bereft of the qualities that should come with maturity,

⁹ Ibid. p.38

¹⁰ Ibid. pp.39-40

¹¹ Ibid. p.40

young men were prone to engage in all sorts of unsuitable activities. Ascham thought "rich and gentlemen's children" to be most at risk from themselves. Preparing a young man for adulthood was precarious. Sending him to court was particularly fraught with danger, although it was important he "should use and delight in all courtly exercises and gentleman like pastimes".¹² A courtier should be "a companion of Nobility, a friend to Vertue, and in hope of honour" and measured by his "Wisdom, Valour, Learning, and Bounty".¹³ The court was not inherently corrupt; it was simply an environment that demanded self-control. Key to a man's successful voyage through his youthful years was that he could withstand temptation and that he developed sufficient rationality.¹⁴ For Brathwait, "estrangement from the government of reason" was the principal disadvantage of youth. The causes of this were manifest, but included the "naturall heat or vigour, which is most predominant in Youth" and "want of Employment".¹⁵

Cultivating appropriate friends was important (see chapter three). Sir William Saville's father had died at a formative stage of his development, making it essential he sought advice from other sources. His uncle, the Earl of Strafford, counselled, on the basis of personal experience,

... till such time as experience hath ripened your judgment, it shall be great wisdom and advantage to distrust yourself and to fortify your youth by the counsel of more aged friends, before you undertake any thing of consequence. It was the course that I governed myself after my father's death, with great advantages to myself and affairs ...¹⁶

¹² Ibid. p.52

¹³ Nicholas Breton 'The Court and Country, or A Briefe Discourse Dialogue-wise Set Downe Betweene a Courtier and a Country-man' (London 1618) in W. Hazlitt *The Roxburgh Library. Tracts Illustrating English Manners, etc., 1579-1618* (London 1868) pp.207-8

¹⁴ See J. Sharpe 'Disruption in a Well-ordered Household' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.) *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London 1996) p.188; A. Bray 'To be a Man in Early Modern England' *History Workshop Journal* 41 (1996) pp.159-61

¹⁵ Brathwait *English Gentleman*. p.27

¹⁶ 'Earl of Strafford to Sir William Saville' in *Practical Wisdom; or, the Manual of Life. The Counsels of Eminent Men to their Children* (London 1824) p.67

Sir William was vulnerable, "left ... as weak in friends as any gentleman" the Earl had ever known "of your quality". He should not enter the court until he was thirty, by which time his "judgment" should be "awakened". A nascent gentleman should not mix with those of a corrupting influence, the "flesh-flies" who preyed especially on men of "great fortunes" and should choose his companions and confidants with care and appropriate guidance from his elders. By entering "into the company of ruffians", a young man was in "overgreat a jeopardy lest their fashions, manners, thoughts, talk, and deeds will very soon be ever like." In short, "The confounding of companies breedeth confusion of good manners both in the court and everywhere else".¹⁷ Only once his character was fully formed could a gentleman resist temptation at court.

Brathwait warned of corrupting influences closer to home and at earlier stages in a gentleman's development. Referring to Quintilian's advice, he stressed the importance of not having "Nurses ... of an immodest and uncomely speech", since "such manners, precepts, and discourses as young children learne in their unriper yeers, remaine so deeply rooted, as they shall scarce ever be relinquished".¹⁸ Margaret Cavendish vouched for her mother's care in ensuring "vulgar serving-men" were never "in the nursery among the nursemaids, lest their love-making might do unseemly actions, or speak unhandsome words in the presence of her children", and reflected, "youth is apt to take infection by ill examples, having not the reason to distinguish good from bad".¹⁹ Both Thomas Salter and Angel Day (writing about young women and men respectively) had earlier compared "the hartes of youth" with "new vesselles, which for ever will keep the savor and tast of that licore where it is first filled".²⁰ A strong concern emerges, therefore, for nurturing the impressionable young.

17 Ibid. pp.70-72

18 Brathwait *English Gentleman* p.91

19 Margaret Cavendish *A True Relation* (1656) [pp.156-58] quoted in N.H. Keeble (ed.) *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman. A Reader* (London 1994) pp.180-1

20 Thomas Salter 'A Mirrhor Mete for all Mothers, Matrones and Maidens, Intituled the Mirrhor of

However, some older relatives were more attentive to youth's need for enjoyment and apparently less concerned with their moral education. Lady Elizabeth Delaval reported gratefully that her aunt had "promoted the mirth of young people always in a most agreeable manner".²¹ Moreover, prescribed male self-control, or contemporary faith in it, perhaps only existed on paper. Featley's sermon on the importance of chastity was directed as much at men as women, while the advice given to some sons suggests that, at least within some social circles, male promiscuity was seen as acceptable or, at least, inevitable.²² Sir Walter Raleigh counselled his son to marry to guard against searching for sexual satisfaction from mistresses, not on moral grounds, but because the practice complicated life, particularly by increasing a man's enemies.²³ Isaac Archer presented himself as a youth who had been thoroughly without reason. Although his father, step-mother and "some pious youths" in his household had provided virtuous examples, his own heart had been "corrupt": he had conducted a life of "sin, vanitie and vice" and had chosen to be "rude, saucy, [and] lascivious" with like-minded boys.²⁴ William Stout, a Quaker merchant, was mindful of the dangers that lay at every turn and implicitly endorsed Ascham's warnings that adults in their late twenties or older were particularly prey to disrupting influences. He had been pursued by a thirty-year-old female neighbour when he was twenty-six, who had taken "all oportunitys ... to allure me to her bed, or to introduce herselfe into myne". (Although presenting himself as the victim, he reflected on

Modestie' (London 1579) transcribed in S. Trill, K. Chedgzy & M. Osborne (eds.) *Lay by Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen. Women Writing in England, 1500-1700* (London 1997) p.45; Angel Day *The English Secreterie* (London 1586; Menston 1967) p.130

²¹ 'The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval' in C.F. Otten (ed.) *English Women's Voices, 1540-1700* (Miami 1992) p.336

²² J. Featley 'The Honor of Chastity: A Sermon' (1632) in L. Davis (ed.) *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance. An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents* (New York & London 1988) pp.145-62; see Bryson *From Courtesy to Civility*. p.275; M.R. Hunt *The Middling Sort. Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (London 1996) pp.69,217

²³ 'Sir Walter Raleigh's Instructions to his Son and to Posterity' 2nd edn (1632) transcribed in L.B. Wright (ed.) *Advice to a Son. Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh and Francis Osborne* (Ithaca 1962) p.23

²⁴ M. Storey (ed.) *Two East Anglian Diaries 1641-1729. Isaac Archer and William Coe*. Suffolk Records Society Vol.XXXVI (Bury St.Edmunds 1994) p.48

the general trend for "men both married and unmarried ... to debauch both other men's wives and unmarried women".)²⁵

Appropriate counsel, education and vocation

Writers were emphatic about the young's need for strong guidance. But they also counselled a cautious approach to its delivery. Ascham criticised parents who tried to teach through force and brutality, advising, "a child shall take more profit of two faults gently named than of four things rightly hit"; "love is fitter than fear, gentleness better than beating". Thus, learning "should always be mingled with honest mirth and comely exercises".²⁶ This related to the more general advice that fathers should be moderate, affectionate and just in governing their families and households (see chapter three). Echoing Ascham's advice, Sir John Oglander stressed that his son, George, should inculcate a fondness for learning in his own children from an early age and take care to "Praise them openly, reprehend them secretly".²⁷

Sir John Strode emphasised the importance of a youth applying himself to scholarly activity: "learning to a gentleman is like a diamond set in a gold ring: one doth beautify the other".²⁸ He went further, stating that if his son were to excel personally, he should do so through "wisdom" rather than the "gentry and lands in which thy fathers have left thee".²⁹ The Earl of Strafford advised that youth was the time to "gather those seeds of virtue and knowledge which may be of use to yourself, and comfort to your friends for the rest of your life", while Oglander identified an affection for learning as "the ground for knowledge and understanding". Not least, it enabled a man to entertain himself: "There is

25 Marshall *The Autobiography of William Stout* pp.103-4

26 Ryan Ascham. *The Schoolmaster* pp.15,20,53

27 See Sir John Oglander 'Rules for a Happy Life' in Aspinall-Oglander *Numwell Symphony* p.48; A. Macfarlane (ed.) *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683* (Oxford 1976) p.3 for Josselin's stress on his father's love manifested in the attention he paid to his education, in lieu of being able to leave him an estate

28 Sir John Strode 'Advice to Son' in Aspinall-Oglander *Numwell Symphony*. pp.51-2

29 Ibid. p.52

no such company as a good book, which will neither dissemble nor flatter thee".³⁰ Sir Henry Sidney stated simply, learning "will stand you in most stead, in that profession of life that you are born to live with".³¹ While scholarship and knowledge did not define gentility, they were significant affirmations of status and birth.

Oglander advised, "Bring thy children up in learning and obedience, yet without austerity. Praise them openly, reprehend them secretly".³² But he was concerned to avoid spoiling children through over-indulgence. Successful child-rearing demanded a balance between providing charges with loving security and exposing them to the realities of the outside world: "Nothing undoeth children [more] than the fondness of parents when they are young, breeding them so tenderly and keeping them from harshness and labour that they seldom prove good for anything afterwards". Oglander concluded, "when I see a child cockered in his youth in silks that certainly he will live in want in his age" (reflecting a common link between dress and moral issues; see chapter eight).³³ He felt the fault in such cases lay firmly with the parents and, typically, with the mother. While the damaging effect of maternal over-indulgence was often cited, Peacham was ambivalent.³⁴ Elizabeth Grymeston advised women to keep their affections in check, reflecting that nothing was as strong as a mother's love.³⁵ Vaughan stressed that parents' responsibility was to "break" children "from their willes, and correct them sharply, when they offend".³⁶ Some writers offered their adult children's perceived misdemeanours as a lesson to others not to over-

³⁰ 'Earl of Strafford to his son' *Practical Wisdom* p.78; Oglander 'Rules for a Happy Life' in Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell-Symphony*. p.49

³¹ 'Earl of Stafford to his son' *Practical Wisdom* p.78; 'Sir Henry Sidney to his son' *Practical Wisdom* [p.56]

³² Oglander 'Rules for a Happy Life' in Oglander-Aspinall *Nunwell Symphony* pp.48,49

³³ F. Bamford (ed.) *A Royalist's Notebook. The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander Kt. of Nunwell* (London, 1936) p.249

³⁴ Peacham *Compleat Gentleman* p.32

³⁵ E. Grymeston *Miscellanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (London 1604; Amsterdam 1979)

unpaginated; see also Dorothy Leigh *The Mothers Blessing: Or, The godly Counsaile of a Gentle-woman, not long since deceased, left behind her for her Children* 7th edn (London 1621) pp.11-12

³⁶ Vaughan *Golden-grove* 2nd Bk., Ch.11

indulge infants.³⁷ There was a need to restrain natural emotions and affection for longer term good.³⁸ This careful balance between avoiding excessive force and exercising an appropriate firmness had parallels with counsel on marital relationships (see chapter eight).

How boys should be educated was a subject for some debate. Vaughan felt a son should be taught at home until he was thirteen, then sent way to school for a few years before entering university.³⁹ For Peacham, the crucial point was that parents took responsibility for ensuring their children were educated effectively, rather than relying on superficial methods that had "so slender an impression". He commended parents who taught their children themselves, or at least had them educated within their own households (significantly, citing the example of Sir Thomas More's teaching his own four daughters.)⁴⁰ Augustine Baker warned parents against the unmanly dangers offered by the universities and advised that sons should be sent directly to the inns of court instead.⁴¹

Vocation formed an important vehicle for achieving masculinity. Sons needed the wherewithal to be self-sufficient. According to Oglander, preparing sons for a profession was part of "good husbandry of thy children" and guarded against their having grounds to "complain against their father as not being in a way wherein they may walk and do themselves good". To raise children for their adult life (implicitly he meant 'boys') he advised,

³⁷ See, for example, 'The Answer of a Mother Unto Her Seduced Son's Letter' in Davis *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance*. p.139

³⁸ See William Gouge *Of Domesticall Duties* (London 1622; Amsterdam 1976) pp.428-29 on the need for parents' authority to be checked by love and *vice versa*; see J.M. Osborn (ed.) *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne* (Oxford 1961) pp.7-8 on the need for a balanced approach to childrearing; see D. Leverenz *The Language of Puritan Feeling: An Exploration in Literature, Psychology and Social History* (New Jersey 1980) pp.77-79 for puritan views on indulging children

³⁹ Vaughan *Golden-grove* 3rd Bk., Ch.38; see also Sir John Strode 'Advice to son' in Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell Symphony*. p.52

⁴⁰ Peacham *Compleat Gentleman*. pp.31, 35-36; see also T.F. Mayer (ed.) *Thomas Starkey. A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*. Camden Fourth Series, Vol.37 (London 1989) p.124

⁴¹ Referred to in Bray 'To be a Man in Early Modern England' p.159

Send some of them as scholars to Winchester College, some to London to be merchants: let none be idle. Make them but scholars and they are fitted for any employment, Divines, Civil or Common lawyers, Physicians or secretary to some great man, etc.⁴²

Peacham was concerned that parents should be sensitive to the "disposition and inclination of their children". He criticised those who pushed their sons into professions for which they were obviously ill-suited, blaming the greed of parents for this "most common mischief" and claiming it formed the "overthrow and undoing of many excellent and prime wits".⁴³ (This has parallels with cautions against pressuring offspring into unsuitable marriages; see chapter eight.)

O'Day has stressed the vocational nature of early-modern education.⁴⁴ Although endorsing this tacitly, Pollock has contested that neither boys nor girls of gentry families were prepared directly for a key and shared role of adult life: managing a household and estate.⁴⁵ But some counsellors were mindful of the value of training in this area. The Earl of Strafford counselled his nephew to resist the temptations of London "these four or five years" and "live in your own house" to "order and understand your own estate; inform and employ yourself in the affairs of the country".⁴⁶ More broadly, Brathwait was keen to dispel the notion that gentlemen were "exempt from all labour", stating "There are other Taskes, other employment besides Manuall and Mechanicke labours, which require your furtherance". He labelled these "Forraine and Domesticall":

⁴² Bamford *Royalist's Notebook* p.249

⁴³ Peacham *Compleat Gentleman* pp.34-35; see W. Prest 'Lawyers' in W. Prest (ed.) *The Professions in Early Modern England*. (London 1987) pp.80-81 on contemporary beliefs about gentlemen's suitability to practise law; see Prest 'Introduction: The Professions and Society in Early Modern England' in Prest *The Professions in Early Modern England*. p.20 for examples of contemporary snobbery regarding the professions; see Firth *Margaret Cavendish*. p.194 for Cavendish's stress on the sensitivity of her husband's parents to their sons' respective dispositions

⁴⁴ R. O'Day *Education and Society 1500-188* (Harlow 1982) p.179

⁴⁵ L. Pollock "'Teach Her to Live Under Obedience': The Making of Women in (the) Upper Ranks of Early Modern England *Continuity and Change* 4 (1989) p.237

⁴⁶ 'Earl of Stafford to Sir William Saville' (1633) in *Practical Wisdom; Or, the Manual of Life. The Counsels of Eminent Men to their Children* (London 1824) pp.68-69

Forraine, as to benefit your Countrey by rare Discoveries, reconveying the rich freight of knowledge ... Domesticall; as in studying the practice of Lawes, or other humane studies ... Here are Labours fit to entertaine Gentlemen, and nought derogating from men of eminest descent or qualitie.⁴⁷

Both boys and girls should develop the skills to perform their future family role. Preparing nascent gentlemen for their eventual status and roles was, in some ways, antithetical to the true masculine code. Boys and young men had to learn to be submissive and silent that they might later wield, and speak with, legitimate authority. Sir Henry Sidney advised that his son needed to "frame" himself to be "humble and obedient" to his master and "feel in yourself what obedience is". He might then command obedience in others.⁴⁸ Similarly, the Earl of Strafford counselled his nephew,

... guide yourself in all things in the pathys of goodness and virtue ... that you may thence take out those rules, which being learnt, may (when it comes to your turn) as well grace and enable you to lead and govern others, as (whilst you are learning of them) it will become you to follow and obey others; and thus shall you possess your youth in modesty, and your elder years in wisdom.⁴⁹

Above all, gentle masculinity had to be learned. There were different views on how young men could best be helped to do this. Cleland advocated overseas travel to achieve maturity and, in particular, to avoid "unconsiderate affection" with young women.⁵⁰ But Oglander and Strode saw even greater evils abroad: Oglander offered the maxim, "Suffer not thy sons to pass the Alps, for they shall learn there nothing but pride, popery, or atheism"; Strode contested that nothing but vice and "lascivious and unwholesome women" lived in Europe (especially France). It was better to keep young men in England, which "hath places enough to delight thine eyes withal".⁵¹ The potential

47 Brathwait *English Gentleman* p.47; see D.A.L. Morgan 'The Individual Style of the English Gentleman' in M. Jones (ed.) *Gentry and the Upper Nobility in Late Medieval Europe* (Gloucester, 1986) p.27; see Firth *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* p.185 for Cavendish's stress on her husbands' conscientious fulfilment of estate matters

48 'Sir Henry Sidney to his Son' (1566) in *Practical Wisdom*. p.57

49 'Earl of Strafford to Sir William Saville'. *Practical Wisdom* p.73

50 James Cleland *The Institution of a Young Man* (Oxford 1607) p.245

51 Oglander 'Rules for a Happy Life' in *Nunwell Symphony* p.48; Strode in *Nunwell Symphony* p.52

evils that lay overseas, including 'deviant' religion and loose women, was amply drawn out in the published letters between an unnamed mother and her 'seduced son'.⁵²

It is thus evident that carefully constructed advice was offered on preparing individuals, especially boys and young men, for their adult roles. Although differing views were expressed on how this could best be achieved (with particular attention paid to the style in which education was delivered), there was a strong concern to guide, prescribe and control, not a willingness to leave maturation to happenstance. The advice raises issues about how individuals were prepared for adulthood in terms of their sex and place within sibling hierarchies.

Relative issues: Gender and siblings

Erickson has suggested that the material or financial investment made by families in raising boys or girls was the same.⁵³ Such a claim might be fair in terms of everyday expenditure and material provision. But male and female children generally received very different levels of education that carried different financial implications. Meanwhile, Sommerville has argued that it was only through marriage that women became subject to men, so that single girls and women were in no qualitatively different position from their brothers: boys and girls had equally to heed the authority of their parents.⁵⁴ Some women might have seen marriage from such a perspective, at least to the extent that they perceived it as an end to independence.⁵⁵ But it remains that boys were reared differently from girls. Education for girls was designed to condition them to become women; that for boys to

⁵² 'The Answer of a Mother Unto her Seduced Son's Letter'. pp.133-43

⁵³ A.L. Erickson *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London 1993) pp.50-53

⁵⁴ M. Sommerville *Sex and Subjection. Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London 1995) p.174

⁵⁵ See C. Jackson (ed.) 'The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newtown, Co. York' *Surtees Society* Vol.62 (Durham 1873) pp.75,76,77; Letter from Lady Ranelagh to an unnamed friend in *Begin, Madam, Although my freedom, etc.* [Four letters to Lady Ranelagh, the first, third and fourth by John Drury, the second by his wife, concerning their marriage] (1645) BL Thomson Tracts E.288. (14.) third letter (p.3)

enable them to become men. Fletcher has stressed girls' limited education, both in the sense that it was less than that enjoyed by boys of the same social status and was deliberately limiting. Girls' identity had to be constructed differently (see chapter four).⁵⁶

But some contemporary commentators saw shortcomings in English ways. Josiah Child promoted practices that had brought a "prodigious increase" in the Netherlands' domestic trade and riches. He attributed the success of the Dutch to several factors, including their adherence to gavelkind (so that "all children possess an equal share of their Fathers Estates ... and so are not left to wrastle with the world in their youth ... as most of your youngest Sons of Gentlemen in England are"), their thriftiness, and the education of their children, "as well Daughters as Sons". In consequence, all had "perfect good hands" and a knowledge of mathematics and "Merchants Accompts", regardless of status and wealth, producing "a strong aptitude, love, and delight" in "commerce of all kinds" in both sexes and enabling Dutch men to continue their trade into old age confident their widows could take up the reins without losing "one third of it, through unexperience and unaptness" of "such Affairs" (by implication, English women would). Moreover, a solid, unisex education allowed Dutch husbands and wives to make genuinely joint decisions.⁵⁷

There was recognition in England of the importance of girls and women learning the art of efficient household and estate management. Echoing Thomas Powell's earlier counsel, *Advice to the Women and Maidens of London* (1678) stressed women's need to

⁵⁶ Fletcher 'Prescription and Practice'. p.342; see I.K. Ben-Amos *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven & London 1994) [p.133]; M. Spufford *Small Books and Pleasant Histories. Popular Fiction and Readership in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge 1985) p.21 for arguments about both the limited nature of girls' education and their increasing educational opportunities during the seventeenth century; R.W. Bushnell *A Culture of Teaching. Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca 1996) p.111

⁵⁷ Sir Josiah Child *Brief Observations concerning Trade and Interest of Money* (London 1668) p.4

... apply themselves to the right understanding and practice of the method of keeping books of accompts, whereby either single or married, they may know their estates, carry on their trades, and avoid the danger of a helpless and forlorn condition, incident to widows.⁵⁸

Drawing analogies to dress-making, Powell counselled that daughters' "breeding" should be like "Dutch Womans cloathing, tending to profit only and comelinesse". Sceptical about the benefits of a lavish education for girls and young women, he advised, "Let them learne plaine works of all kind, so they take heed of too open seaming". Rather than "song[s] and Musick", they should be taught "Cookery and Laundry". If their mother was "a good Huswife, and Religiously disposed", she should be charged with "the bringing up of one of them". The other "two foorth" should respectively be placed in the households of a merchant and lawyer "before they can judge of a good manly Leg" and "where the serving man is not too predominant". In short, a daughter should "learne what belongs to her improvement, for sempstry, confectionary, and all requisits of Huswifery".⁵⁹

Individuals writing for their families paid less attention to their daughters' preparation for adulthood than to that of their sons. Sir William Wentworth gave detailed prescripts on how his son should raise his male offspring but, in relation to daughters, stated simply, "leave the manor of their education to the advice of some aged discrete Matron's direction."⁶⁰ Despite the otherwise didactic nature of her treatise, Elizabeth Jocelin left to her husband how he educated their daughter.⁶¹ Margaret Cavendish explained she could not account for how her three brothers had been raised, not only because she had been too young to observe but because "the breeding of men were after different manner of ways from those of women".⁶² It is possible, however, to discern a wide range of views on, and experiences of, appropriate female learning. Some women

⁵⁸ Quoted in P. Earle *The Making of the English Middle Class* (London 1989) p.161

⁵⁹ Thomas Powell *The Art of Thriving. Or, The plaine path-way to preferment. Together with the mysterie and misery of Lending and Borrowing* (London 1635) p.113-15

⁶⁰ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his son' (1604) in J.P. Cooper (ed.) *Wentworth Papers 1597-1628*. Camden Fourth Series, Vol.12 (London 1973) p.21

⁶¹ Elizabeth Jocelin *The Mothers Legacie, to her unborne Childe* (London 1624) [unpaginated]

⁶² Cavendish 'A True Relation of my Birth' in Keeble *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman*. pp.180-1

were given the opportunity to learn Latin and Greek as children. Others followed a much more standard and basic syllabus.⁶³ The Countess of Warwick stated proudly that her guardian, Lady Claytone, had ensured that she had been "soberly educated".⁶⁴ From this we can perhaps infer more about what she was not taught than what she was.⁶⁵

But finer distinctions were applied than just those of sex to how the young were prepared for adulthood. Position in the age hierarchy of siblings was particularly significant, with male heirs reared differently from their younger brothers.⁶⁶ Just as Fletcher has indicated was the case for girls, eldest sons were prepared differently for their adult role from their siblings. The contrasting prospects caused by place in the sibling hierarchy was not lost on contemporaries. Philip Gawdy emphasised the different experiences and expectations separating him from his brother Bassingborne.⁶⁷ Thomas Wilson, in *The State of England* (1600), asserted the status of younger brothers as "of all stations for gentlemen most miserable". Claiming "no man has better cause to know" the ills of younger brothers, he explained a gentleman on a limited income could not afford to leave anything to his younger sons, "unless it be by lease for twenty-one years or for three lives". In consequence, the eldest son became the master of his siblings:

He must have all, and all the [other brothers] that which the cat left on the malt heap, perhaps some small annuity during his life or what please our elder brother's worship to bestow upon us, if we please him may my mistress his wife.⁶⁸

⁶³ See R.H. Saunders (ed.) *The Official Papers of Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, Norfolk as Justice of the Peace, 1580-1620* Camden Third Series. Vol. XXVI (London 1915) p.220; G. Edelen (ed.) *William Harrison 'The Description of England'* (New York 1968) p.228; *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*. pp.16, 340; Jocelin *Mothers Legacie* [unpaginated]; Leigh *Mothers Blessing*. pp.24,46; M. Tyler *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood, Now Newly Translated out of Spanish into our Vulgar English Tongue, by M.T.* (London 1578) unpaginated

⁶⁴ Crofton-Croker *Autobiography of the Countess of Warwick*. p.2

⁶⁵ See Marshall *Autobiography of William Stout*. p.68 for differences between his sister's education compared with that enjoyed by himself and his brothers

⁶⁶ See Pollock "Teach Her to Live Under Obedience" pp.231-58; O'Day *Education and Society*. p.248

⁶⁷ Letters from Philip Gawdy to Bassingborne Gawdy, 1st May [1593] & 20th November [1604] BL Egerton MS 2804 ff.86,193

⁶⁸ T. Wilson 'The State of England 1600' quoted in L. Stone *Social Change and Revolution in England*,

Wilson perceived his sister-in-law to have precedence over him because she was married to his elder brother.⁶⁹ However, he considered being a younger son had some merits. It encouraged resourcefulness and self-reliance and afforded opportunities to achieve success through personal endeavour and effort:

... it makes us industrious to apply ourselves to letters or to arms, whereby many times we become master elder brothers' masters, or at least their betters in honours and reputation, while he lives at home like a monk and knows the sound of no other bell but his own.⁷⁰

By implication, it was more difficult for elder sons - endowed, literally, with birthrights - to prove their gentility through virtue.⁷¹

However, preparation for adulthood could not be determined solely by individuals' relationship to siblings. It could not be guaranteed that an eldest son would survive to, or throughout, adulthood to fulfil the role created by his birth. Others, therefore, had to be prepared for a potential change of role. Following the death of his older brother, Charles Rich moved swiftly from the status of a younger son who had presented a poor prospect of marriage for Mary Boyle (at least in her father's eyes) to the inheritor of his family's substantial fortune.⁷² A significant proportion of families failed to produce a male heir at all, or were unable to provide even for their eldest son.⁷³ Families were likely to have

1540-1640 (London 1965) p.118; see also Child *Brief Observations Concerning Trade*. p.3; R. Persons *The Jesuit's Memorial. For the Intended Reformation of England., Under their First Popish Prince* (London 1690) pp.227-228; see J. Thirsk 'The European Debate on Customs of Inheritance, 1500-1700' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E.P. Thompson (eds.) *Family and Inheritance. Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800* (Cambridge 1976) p.191 for gentry families' difficulties in adhering to primogeniture; see V. Larmine 'Settlement and Sentiment: Inheritance and Personal Relationships among Two Midland Gentry Families in the Seventeenth Century' *Midland History* 12 (1987) pp.31-32 for stress on primogeniture not forming the only inheritance pattern

⁶⁹ Wilson in Stone *Social Change and Revolution* p.118

⁷⁰ Ibid. p.118

⁷¹ See Mayer *Thomas Starkey*. p.130; for an account of the tensions caused by inheritance arrangements as they applied to siblings see P. Braybrooke (ed.) *The Autobiography of Sir John Bramston, K.B. of Skreens, in the Hundred of Chelmsford* Camden Society (London 1845) pp.106-7; see L. Bonfield *Marriage Settlements, 1601-1740. The Adoption of the Strict Settlement* (Cambridge 1983) pp.15-17

⁷² Crofton-Croker *Autobiography of the Countess of Warwick*. pp.13, 27

⁷³ See Macfarlane *Diary of Ralph Josselin*. [p.1]

been too aware of the whimsy of mortality rates simply to have raised their children in narrowly role-defined ways (see chapter two).⁷⁴ More basic, day-to-day considerations are also likely to have prevailed. There is therefore a danger in stressing too much the limiting education that girls received and the limited adult role for which they were prepared when we know that this carried significant powers and responsibilities (see chapter four).⁷⁵ Likewise, with the gentry (if not, perhaps, among the nobility), there was a strong belief that *all* sons should be trained for a vocation, whether that of the law, the church, medicine, military or civic duty.

Appropriate presentation

The development of a young man's speech and writing was central to his becoming a gentleman. For Peacham, "speech is the Character of a man, and the Interpreter of his mind, and writing the Image of that", while Brathwait explained, "Speech is termed the Index of the Minde".⁷⁶ In keeping with their need to learn obedience, that they might one day be obeyed, nascent gentlemen were advised to retain a modesty in public until they could command an audience with propriety. Henry Sidney advised his son, "Be rather a hearer and bearer away of other men's talk, than a beginner or procurer of speech". Otherwise, Philip would be deemed to delight in his own voice - something that could only undermine his reputation.⁷⁷ It was better that a nascent gentleman was "modest in each assembly, and rather be rebuked of light fellows, for maidenlike shamefacedness, than of your sad friends for pert boldness". Above all, he should not forget "the betokening reins, or bridles" that were provided by teeth and lips.⁷⁸ Brathwait counselled,

⁷⁴ See Bonfield *Marriage Settlements*. p.122 on the flexible approaches to settlement practices because of mortality rates

⁷⁵ See L. Pollock *With Faith and Physic. The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman. Lady Grace Mildmay 1552-1620* (London 1993) p.19

⁷⁶ Peacham *Compleat Gentleman* p.42; Brathwait *English Gentleman* p.89; see also Thomas Blount *The Academy of Eloquence* (London 1654; Menston 1971) Epistle dedicatory [p.3]

⁷⁷ 'Sir Henry Sidney to his Son'. *Practical Wisdom*. p.59; 'Sir Matthew Hale to His Son'. *Practical Wisdom*. p.184

⁷⁸ 'Sir Henry Sidney to his Son'. *Practical Wisdom*. p.59

"moderation of the tongue is ... an absolute vertue", but explained he meant not a "Pythagorian silence", which was "many times prejudiciall in the publicke state".⁷⁹ This advice has strong parallels with that given to women (by men). A fundamental difference remains, however: young, nascent gentlemen were learning the ropes before taking on their future role of mastery; women were not being primed for such a role. Public and deferential muteness (although not complete silence) was desirable in them for life. However, this did not extend to familial and domestic spheres (see chapters four and eight).

Nascent gentlemen had to develop a style of writing that was fashionable and a credit to themselves. They should "imitate the best Authors" while also exercising their "own Invention".⁸⁰ Thomas Blount raised the rhetorical question, "how shall that person be esteem'd prudent, whose pen layes him wide open in a fungous and sordid stile[?]", and offered the maxim, "He that has worth in him and cannot expresse it, is a Cabinet keeping a Jewell and the key lost".⁸¹ This encouragement to indulge in studied self-fashioning again raises the central paradox of early-modern masculinity: the very keenness to display social distinction led to the publication of prescriptive texts, offering the potential for imposters to learn the rules and to shape themselves into presentable gentlemen. It also highlights the assumption that gentlemanly conduct was unnatural. Indeed, in this sense, it reflected the entrenched hierarchy in which children, women and men were respectively further away from nature, and the higher social orders further away than the lower ones.⁸² However, the unnaturalness of gentle masculinity did not mean it was superficial; its very art lay in ensuring that speech, writing and other personal signifiers formed true representations of the inner self. Individuals were expected to develop that inner self (or were presumed to have a good, sound core from the outset) as the precursor to

79 Brathwait *English Gentleman* pp.89,90

80 Peacham *Compleat Gentleman*. p.44

81 Blount *Academic of Eloquence*. Epistle dedicatory [p.3]

82 See Bryson *From Courtesy to Civility*. p.270

constructing their public demeanour. Moreover, the very process of learning helped individuals to demonstrate their virtue and preparedness for family and civic responsibilities (see chapter three).

Concluding remarks

What emerges from the 'advice to son' texts is an acute sense of gentlemen's life-cycle. Davidoff and Hall's conclusions that manliness and femininity for the nineteenth-century English middle class "were not fixed categories acquired in childhood but were constantly being tested, challenged and reworked both in imagination and in the encounters of daily life" holds good for the gendered codes for the early-modern English gentry.⁸³ A gentleman's youth was a time for learning the skills, attributes and qualities that would make him virtuous, civil and honourable in adulthood. In his nascent state, his status was not so different from that of women: he should be subordinate to his elders, deferential and limited in his speech, and should learn the practical skills of efficient estate management. Of key importance was not that he was different from his sisters, but that he acquired the demeanour and style to justify his eventual status above other men. A nascent gentleman's full membership of manhood rested on his fulfilling his potential and his learning to conform - and to demonstrate his conformity - to a prescribed ideal. His social inferiors, according to a strict interpretation of the code, were men who lacked even associate masculine status. Young gentlewomen, on the other hand, were destined to a parallel code that shared strong similarities with the code for gentlemen.⁸⁴

⁸³ L. Davidoff & C. Hall *Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London 1987) p.450

⁸⁴ See L. Roper *The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford 1989) pp.258-59; L. Roper *Oedipus and the Devil. Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London 1994) p.62; see also Brathwait *English Gentleman*. p.222 and Bray 'To be a Man in Early Modern Society' pp.155-65 on the importance of male self-control

How the young social élite were prepared for their gendered, adult roles was complex. The experiences of girls were more proscribed and limited than those of their male counterparts, not least because the opportunities available to them in adulthood were fewer. There was less need for girls to receive a full, academic education because they had fewer channels for applying it (this is not to say that no girls followed a scholarly syllabus, or that there were no proponents of the desirability of this).⁸⁵ But strong attempts were also made within families and by those who wrote for a general audience to control the experiences and behaviour of boys and young men. The didacticism levelled at them was more diverse, substantial and wide-ranging. Significantly, it also revolved around domestic and family life as much as nascent gentlemen's future roles in civic society. This highlights the central importance of marriage, and the way in which this was entered, for men as well as women.

⁸⁵ See Woodward *Desiderius Erasmus* pp.150-1 regarding Erasmus' flexible views on the girls' education needing to prepare them appropriately for their vocation

Sex and gender within families: similar but different

Richard Brathwait's *The English Gentleman* and *The English Gentlewoman* allow a straightforward comparison to be made between how he thought members of each sex should conduct themselves. The dedicatory epistle to the latter lists qualities that could equally have come from its companion volume: a gentlewoman should be virtuous, self-effacing, educated, diligent, neat in apparel, generous, graceful, civil, and of a "well-composed mind"; she should be measured more by her "owne internall worth, then any outward weare"; she should be consistent, and simply "her selfe". Only a few additional statements - that a gentlewoman should be reluctant to teach others, wear "A cheerefull modesty" as "her cherist ornament", have "A chast soule" and "a covenant with her eyes never to wander" - betray that it was ideal femininity that Brathwait was describing.¹ With some qualification, gentle femininity was not so different from gentle masculinity. It certainly was not its opposite.

Sir John Bramston offered parallel descriptions of exemplary male and female qualities and action in his reflections on his mother and father following their deaths. Almost formulaic in their content and structure, these too reveal interesting similarities and differences:

She was a beautiful, comely person, of a midle stature, virtuous and pious, a very observant wife, a carefull tender mother; she was very charitable to the poore, kind to her neighbours, and beloved by them, and died much lamented by all who knew her.

He was a man of midle stature, in his youth spare and active, in his age not fatt nor gross, but fleshie; very temperate in diet. He was of profound judgment in the lawes, a very patient hearer of causes, free from passion or partialitie, very modest in giving his opinion and judgment, which he did useually with such reasons as often convinced those that differed from him.²

¹ Richard Brathwait *The English Gentlewoman* (London 1631; Amsterdam 1970) Dedicatory epistle

² P. Braybrooke (ed.) *The Autobiography of Sir John Bramston, K.B. of Skreens, in the Hundred of Chelmsford* Camden Society (London 1845) pp.34,96

Gender differences rested on matters of degree and the precise way in which the qualities of sobriety, deference and affability were framed. Sexual honour and role within the family formed a strong base for the characteristics of a gentlewoman. Gentlemen were afforded a broader scope for demonstrating their virtue and skill, but the impression is firmly gained of complementary, rather than opposite, codes and roles. Margaret Cavendish's proud statement that her mother's prime motivations in educating herself and her siblings had been to ensure they were "bred virtuously, modestly, civilly, honourably, and on honest principles" was not gender-specific. Although her brothers had been raised in a "different manner of ways" from herself and her sisters, the core qualities instilled in them were common. They simply had a different complexion.³

Advice on raising young people throws into sharp relief thinking on human nature and life-cycle, appropriate roles for men and women, relationships between the sexes, and social status. Much of the counsel offered to parents and their offspring, and meted out by parents to their children, had as much to do with preserving the social hierarchy and respect for the wisdom of age as it did with delineating male and female roles. There was perhaps an 'inverted snobbery', to the extent that it might have been acceptable for the highest born - and, indeed, the earliest born - to live lives of luxury manifested in idle recreation (although even this was frowned upon). But the badge of those of lesser social status was evidence of industry. For young men, this was manifested in preparing for a profession. For both sexes, it involved developing competence in household and estate affairs. In this sense, they shared a common vocation. Acting in partnership was crucial to husbands and wives' effective joint governance of the household (see chapter eight).

So while early-modern ideologies of masculinity and femininity were defined by their relationship to one another, they were not poles apart. The two shared similar

³ Margaret Cavendish 'A True Relation of My Birth' (1656) [pp.156-58] quoted in N.H. Keeble (ed.) *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman. A Reader* (London 1994) p.181

qualities, thereby creating overlapping codes of acceptable masculine and feminine roles and demeanour. Within the straitjacket of social position, men and women were expected to behave and conduct themselves in largely similar ways. Adherence to the basic premise of female inferiority informed legal, economic and political frameworks that also impacted on the family and domestic roles. But within a context of prescribed male supremacy and female subordination, male and female behaviour and activity were afforded significant fluidity and confluence.

Most strikingly, masculine and feminine codes admitted a range of shared personal characteristics and implied a shared body of duties. This brings into question whether certain qualities can really be described as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Historians' tendency to see silence as a male-imposed characteristic of femininity, for example, needs revision; nascent gentlemen were expected to display a qualified silence that was similar to that expected of women. For neither men nor women was it a complete muteness, but one that showed due deference to their superior - that is, truly masculine - companions. It could be countered that the impression of common codes for gentlemen and women is only gained because of the texts studied. But it is significant that gentlemen's advisers attended primarily to cultivating personal qualities that were as significant in familial and household settings as in more public arenas. Advice manual authors could have advised on asserting power. They chose, instead, to counsel on what amounted to modesty. Through achieving this outward show of deference, gentlemen could show to others they possessed virtue and learning and were deserving of honour. These qualities were equally required of gentlewomen, although in somewhat different ways. In defining gentle masculinity, it was other men - and the men whom failed gentlemen might become - who formed the primary foil and fallen gentlemen who formed the principal bogeyman. The significance and application of these key qualities in the context of marriage formation are considered in the next section, while their implications for the husband-and-wife partnership are considered in more detail in chapter eight.

Questions of inference

Marriage formation can tell us a great deal about ideas and experiences of family relationships, relations between men and women, and broader thinking on sex and gender. It not only gives insights into attitudes and prevalent thinking on marriage *per se*, but reveals thinking about wider family networks and how these worked in practice. It also indicates the importance individuals attached to their kinship ties and highlights lines of authority and decision-making within families. Marriage formation is therefore particularly useful for evaluating ideas and beliefs that defined relationships between parents and their children, the significance of wider family networks, and the thinking that informed relations between siblings (especially the dynamics between eldest sons and their younger brothers created by families' adherence to primogeniture). It forces consideration of the beliefs and attitudes pertaining to relationships with other families and the impact of wider cultural thinking on family life (for example, religious belief, concepts of gentility and notions of gender). It also throws light on historiographical issues of family and household, including the relative importance of the nuclear and extended family, the significance of relationships within the household compared with kinship ties between those distanced physically from one another, and the nuances of power and authority created by the intersecting axes of sex, age, and individual and family life-cycles (see chapter two).¹

The following two chapters focus on marriage formation within the higher social ranks in early-modern England as revealed through letters. They each adopt a case-study approach, the first examining correspondence of two gentry families and the second offering a detailed analysis of three letters selected for their exclusive attention on facets of forging marriages from quite different perspectives. There are perhaps two opposing

¹ See R. O'Day *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900. England, France & the United States of America* (London 1994); P. Griffith, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.) *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London 1996)

dangers in looking at documents in isolation in this way: that gross and misplaced generalisations are made from a small number of sources; and that so great a caution is exercised about the sources' subjectivity that nothing of a wider currency is inferred. There is a middle route, however, that admits the potential for qualified inference and that acknowledges the active role that documents such as letters played. It is such an approach that the chapters seek to adopt.

Chrisman and Slater have each adopted a case-study approach to letters to assess the quality of family relationships, and have both used surviving manuscripts of the Verney family, although to support conflicting theories.² Chrisman has made additional use of surviving papers of the French Chantal-Rabutin-Sevigne family to compare the impact of Catholic and Protestant doctrine on marriage and family relationships and has concluded that, while Catholicism and Protestantism both endorsed the exercise of patriarchal authority within families, the latter afforded women greater influence and freedom than the former. Conversely, Slater has presented the Verney family as epitomising the exercise of absolute patriarchy in seventeenth-century English (Protestant) families. These divergent interpretations of the Verney material are interesting in themselves and are testimony to the intrinsic subjectivity of historians' readings of historical evidence.³ In terms of methodology, they highlight the risks of making broad generalisations from a limited range of sources.

The apparent differences in gender relations in the Verney and Chantal-Rabutin-Sevigne families identified by Chrisman might have been the product of a multitude of factors, including those that were unique to the respective families or the particular incidences and events covered by the material, rather than reflecting broader trends

² M. Chrisman 'Family and Religion in Two Noble Families: French Catholic and English Puritan' *Journal of Family History* 8 (1983) pp.190-210; M. Slater *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century. The Verneys of Claydon House* (London 1984)

³ H. White *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore 1978) Ch.2

defined by religious persuasion. Other factors, such as national differences (however, intangible and difficult to establish) might also have had significance, while evidence from other families might have wrought different conclusions. Certainly, the Aston letters, explored in chapter six, show that Catholic families could afford children substantial freedom in marriage formation. Similarly, the balance of power and affective relationships inferred by Slater in the Verney family was not replicated in the Barringtons, a contemporary Protestant family of similar social standing. Thus, Slater's assertion that family relationships were founded on a superficial adherence to propriety and a cold manipulation of kinship obligation seems rash.

Potential problems of inference should not undermine case studies' usefulness for allowing a detailed analysis of attitudes and motivations, provided that sources' limitations are acknowledged and their potential for complexity, variation and ambiguity welcomed. In chapter seven the issues are more about inferences that can be made from contrasting missives written over a comparatively long time period and for very different purposes. However, selection of three diverse letters seems justified because their very eclecticism helps shed light on a common theme. That they have different tones and styles and chart an evident modernising of language does not detract from their presenting shared attitudes and beliefs on forging marriages, relationships within families (including nuances of gender within these), and the significance of affection.

The writers' attitudes and thinking emerge through a detailed consideration of their missives. Although, as isolated documents, the letters cannot tell us what happened in reality, they do help develop our awareness of what informed and shaped practice and give us a better understanding of apparent tensions in beliefs and attitudes. The nature and status of the letters is also made overt through a case-study approach. Instead of their being used simply to provide 'evidence', we can consider how attitudes and viewpoints were created, communicated, endorsed and challenged, a useful reminder that sources are not neutral. At the same time, a close consideration of individual letters

highlights their rehearsal of dominant thinking. Together, the two chapters offer a more detailed commentary and illustration of issues addressed elsewhere in the thesis.

Chapter six

Marriage formation within the Aston and Barrington Families

Letters from the manuscript collections of the Aston and Barrington families offer useful insights into the multifarious nature of marriage formation within the early-modern English gentry.¹ They illustrate the variety of approaches taken to brokering marriages and show the diverse factors and parties involved in decision-making. The searches and negotiations undertaken on behalf of Joan Altham and Joan Meux, young women within the extended Barrington family, show the essentially passive role that could be played by prospective brides - and, indeed, prospective bridegrooms - and the active parts played by family members and agents acting on their behalf. They also reveal female relatives' strong involvement in matchmaking. It can be inferred that roles within this crucial process were not gender-defined and that the Barringtons attached importance to securing marriages sustained by established, or potential, mutual affection. Sir Thomas Barrington's and Lady Judith Smith's courtship shows how second marriages could be forged, indicating both the greater independence that each partner could enjoy in negotiations and the continued importance of family approval and consent. Herbert Aston and Katherine Thimelby appear to have entered a courtship with complete freedom, but their liaison proved wholly satisfactory to senior family members. These three types of marriage formation mirror closely the categories cited by Stone as showing "the ambiguities and uncertainties" of early-modern marriage-making.²

The Barrington and Aston families serve as useful foils. While of similar social status, the former was strongly puritan, offering patronage to ministers of that persuasion in the early seventeenth century. The Astons, by contrast, were Catholic. The possible impact of the families' different religious persuasion on their approach to marriage

¹ Aston Papers, Private Correspondence 1613-1703, BL Add.MS 36,452; Barrington Papers, BL Egerton MS 2643, 2644, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2650, 2651

² L. Stone *Uncertain Unions. Marriage in England 1660-1753* (Oxford 1992) pp.7,3

formation, is explored at the end of the chapter. The Barrington family were based in Hatfield Broadoak in north-west Essex, where they held substantial land and played a strong role in public administration.³ The Astons were based at Cotton, near Tixall in Staffordshire. Herbert Aston's father, Walter, was made a baronet in 1611 and created Baron Aston of Forfar in 1627. He acted as James I's ambassador to Spain between 1619 and 1625 (and again between 1635 and 1639). It was during residence in Spain that he adopted Catholicism and subsequently raised his family in the faith.⁴ Basic genealogical tables for the Barrington and Aston families are provided as appendices to the chapter.

The Barrington family papers reveal the underpinning importance of the financial arrangements of possible matches, although set these firmly in the context of other considerations (the Aston correspondence intriguingly makes no reference to matters of resources). Figures presented in the Barrington correspondence can be compared with those provided by Stone relating to average portions proffered by aristocratic families. In the 1580s and 1590s, portions of £2,000 were common. During the first quarter of the seventeenth century, the average sum rose to £3,800, while between 1629 and 1649, only five out of forty-one portions below £5,000 were detailed in surviving records of matches secured with a member of the peerage.⁵ Families in the seventeenth century seem to have invested a greater part of their income in securing marriages for their daughters than their sixteenth-century relatives had done, with gentle and noble families commonly offering three times the annual income of their estates.⁶ The portions referred to in relation to Joan Meux and Joan Altham (variously reported to have been £2000 and £1000) reflect their lesser status as members of a gentry family, although Stone has concluded that portions

³ G. Rickard 'Members of Parliament for Colchester, 1603 - 1683' *Essex Review* Vol.V Nos.19,20 (1896) pp.199-202; A. Searle *Barrington Family Letters 1628-1632* Camden Fourth Series, Vol.28 (London 1983) pp.7-11

⁴ See A. Clifford (ed.) *Tixall Letters: or the Correspondence of the Aston Family and their Friends During the Seventeenth Century* (Edinburgh 1815) pp.v-vi,14-17,63

⁵ L. Stone *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (London 1966) pp.638-41

⁶ Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. p.642; see also A. Macfarlane *Marriage and Love in England. Modes of Reproduction, 1300-1840* (Oxford 1986) p.264

offered by those of the highest social rank during James I's reign were only marginally higher than those offered by the richer gentry, lawyers and merchants.⁷ Information about jointures is generally more difficult to come by, although it seems that those presented by families of the aristocracy usually represented about a third of the annual income derived from estate rentals.⁸ The Barrington correspondence does include some details. However, it is clear that factors other than jointures were more important in the family's decision-making.

Marriage negotiations for Joan Altham and Joan Meux

The protracted nature of marriage negotiations emerges through surviving Barrington family papers, as does the large number of family members drawn into searching for, securing and approving a match. The arrangement of marriages for Joan Altham, step-daughter and daughter respectively of Sir William and Elizabeth Masham and Joan Meux, daughter of widowed Sir William Meux, each involved lengthy and complex negotiations relating to several prospective suitors. Letters written by the young women's parents to Lady Joan Barrington reveal the many factors that informed the family's views on who would constitute suitable husbands. The prospective financial settlement simply formed the basis for initial negotiation, establishing whether a match seemed viable and worth pursuing.

Qualitative and subjective factors, in addition to the financial considerations, were of significant concern to the Barrington family. These included the reputation, social standing and religiosity of both the suitor and his family; prospects for the suitor's social status to rise through his vocation and the wider prospects of his family; the practical provision that would be made for the newly-wedded couple; the geographical distance between the two families; and the level of affection between the prospective couple. All

⁷ Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy* p.639; see chapter four for the suggestion that the monetary component of Joan Meux's portion might have been supplemented by an offer of land, an unattractive prospect to Lady Jane Cornwallis

⁸ Ibid. pp.638-39

formed criteria against which the desirability of a match was measured and could take precedence over obtaining generous financial provision.

Ezekiel Rogers, a chaplain to the Barrington family, looked for potential suitors for Joan Altham, identifying Mr. Slingsby, whose father had "fine lands in ye town of Knaresborough", as a possible match. Hoping Elizabeth Masham would bear Mr. Slingsby in mind "if God deny a mach to fitt neere hand", Mr. Rogers appealed to Lady Joan to use her influence over her daughter.⁹ It is not apparent from surviving correspondence whether Mr. Rogers' suggestions were pursued further, but the match did not come to fruition. Significantly, given his distant relationship to the family, Sir Francis Harris (father of Sir George Lamplugh, a son-in-law of Sir Francis and Lady Joan Barrington) was also involved in marriage negotiations for both Joan Altham and Joan Meux. In a letter dated 14th September 1629, he reported on the attractiveness of an unnamed match for the former. A jointure was proposed of "£1000 a yeare in p[re]sent possessions, & £200 a yeere moore within two, or 3 yeeres, & £1000 ayeere more after a Grandmother (who is very Aged) & his lady mothers deathe". Sir Francis regarded this as a good offer, and lamented Joan's parents had not shown a greater interest. Although keen to promote the match, he stated his intention to leave a decision to God and Joan's parents.¹⁰ In a further letter to Lady Joan Barrington, Sir Francis advised the jointure had been enhanced slightly to "twelve hundreth pounds ayeere in p[re]sent possessione & £200 more" after the death of the suitor's mother and grandmother, but reported a response was still awaited from the Mashams, suggesting that he was more keen to secure a match than them (although perhaps less cautious).¹¹

Subsequent letters from Elizabeth Masham to her mother indicate she and her husband did develop an eventual interest in the match, only then to develop reservations about its suitability. Of particular concern to Elizabeth was that Sir Robert Bevell

⁹ Ezekiel Rogers to Lady Joan Barrington, 28 September [1629]. BL Egerton MS 2644, f.240

¹⁰ Sir Francis Harris to Lady Joan Barrington, 14 September 1629. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.52

¹¹ Sir Francis Harris to Lady Joan Barrington, 26 September 1629. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.61

(probably the father of the potential husband) had stipulated that a jointure for "Jugg" (as Joan was called by her parents) would be conditional upon assurance that her future husband would gain rights to her lands. In accordance with the proposed terms, Jugg would regain her lands should her husband die before her.¹² The question had also arisen as to where the newly-married couple would live, since the young man's father had expressed unwillingness that "his soan sholde live with him" after marriage. Elizabeth was unable to explain such a reluctance; certainly it seems to have been quite common practice for a groom's parents to provide accommodation in the early years of a couple's marriage (see chapter two).¹³ Elizabeth inferred little generosity would be shown by the young man's family, with only that formally agreed between the families likely to be forthcoming.¹⁴ This suggests it was usual to assume a level of goodwill within negotiations beyond that which was coldly stated within a marriage settlement (see chapter seven).

Doubts about the attractiveness of the match seem to have been allayed, at least temporarily. Elizabeth informed her mother an agreement had been reached that Jugg should not be required to forfeit her lands in order to obtain the terms of the jointure - a requirement she indicated that Jugg "would by no means yeeld to". Elizabeth reflected that for her daughter to retain her land was "fitting for many reasons"; in particular, it would place her well should she be left a widow with a wish to remarry.¹⁵ In a further, undated letter, Elizabeth was optimistic issues could be resolved; "the yonge & old mans [had] great desire of the proceeding with this match and his well aproving of o[u]r family". Subject to her mother's approval, Elizabeth stated, "we will proseed in further treaty" and

12 See "draft demands" (October 1609) from Joan Thynne to Sir Roger Owen regarding a possible match between her daughter, Dorothy, and Sir Roger's brother William, in which she set monetary requirements that should apply in different scenarios (the match did not come off), transcribed in A. Wall (ed.) *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575-1611* Wiltshire Record Society Vol. XXXVIII ((Devizes 1983) pp.60-61

13 Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy* p.634

14 Lady Elizabeth Masham to Lady Joan Barrington [undated; November 1629?] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.84

15 Lady Elizabeth Masham to Lady Joan Barrington, 24 November [1629] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.88

"make Conclusions of matters of estate". The financial agreement proposed was "£300 maintenance besides hir own land & soe much in Joynter". £1200 per annum was to be settled upon the young man and "his ayers mayles". Elizabeth felt that it would be fitting for the inheritance "to be settled upon ye Isue whether maile or female specially considering he hath more lands which he may settle upon his younger sonne if his eldest dye without Isue maile". She requested her mother's views on the matter, as well as her prayers.¹⁶ A settlement was not reached despite this apparent progress. It is not possible to gauge from surviving correspondence whether the Barrington family withdrew or whether negotiations faltered for other reasons.

Fresh discussions were underway by the end of 1629, this time initiated by Sir Nathaniel Rich. Oliver St.John was their focus. Sir Thomas Barrington reported on the development to his mother, but warned her not to talk to any one on the matter "because ye success is doubtfull".¹⁷ He considered the match desirable, not least because Mr. St.John was "probable to rise" as a lawyer and was well "befreended" (see chapter five). In terms of personal qualities, the young man was reputed to be "religious, honest, of sweetness in nature, [and] discreet". As a possible match for Jugg, he was "not to be slighted".¹⁸ Elizabeth Masham did not view Oliver St.John quite so positively. She had heard "very worthy of the man", but she believed his estate to be "very small[,] not above £200 a yere", and understood the young man's own reputation to be sullied by rumours that his father had "a base sonne". Further, she understood his legal experience to be "little". Sir Nathaniel Rich had calculated that "mr S[ai]nt John colde not spende less than £500 yearly himselfe now he is a single man". Thus, it could not be seen how he could cope with the additional financial burdens brought about by marriage.¹⁹

16 Lady Elizabeth Masham to Lady Joan Barrington [undated; November 1629?] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.92

17 Sir Thomas Barrington to Lady Joan Barrington, 29 December 1629. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.114

18 Ibid. f.115

19 Lady Elizabeth Masham to Lady Joan Barrington [undated] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.120

It is apparent that Elizabeth Masham's reservations about the match sprang not just from doubts about Oliver St. John's capacity to offer financial security to her daughter but an unwillingness for her family to be linked with one whose honour had been undermined by the reputed existence of an illegitimate half-sibling. Significantly, however, Elizabeth was willing to accept Mr. St. John as a good match for Jugg providing her mother saw him as such. To this extent, she was prepared to relinquish authority to sanction the marriage despite her overt doubts about its being good for her daughter or wider family. She expressed relief that Jugg was "very willing to be directed by her frindes" and to accept the advice she received from them as being necessarily sound (see chapters five and eight).²⁰

By March 1630, Jugg was reported to have developed "a good affection" for Oliver St. John, from which it can be inferred the couple had had the opportunity to meet. However, her emotions had not blinded her to the importance of her family securing a satisfactory financial agreement. On the contrary, Elizabeth assured her mother that Jugg was "very desirous of sum good inherytance for her posteyty & hath hir selfe expressed as much to" her suitor. On this basis, it was hoped Mr. St. John's family might be persuaded to enhance the terms of the marriage agreement "in respect of provision for posteryty". Elizabeth reflected, "o[u]r care must extend [to the future] as well as for the present"; she was clearly relieved that her daughter also appreciated this.²¹ A further letter from Elizabeth expressed her intention to visit her mother to reach "sum conclution of this busynis".²² Although not chronicled in the surviving correspondence, the marriage must have been finalised shortly after. On 26th May 1630, Oliver St. John wrote to Lady Joan Barrington making passing reference to his wife.²³ A letter of 13th May 1630 from Sir Thomas Barrington to his mother also refers to his niece who, "after her pleasures taken in being Mrs. of house & servants (whare in she hath contemplated the happynes of a married

20 Ibid. ff.120,122

21 Lady Elizabeth Masham to Lady Joan Barrington, 1 March 1629. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.154

22 Lady Elizabeth Masham to Lady Joan Barrington [undated] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.168

23 Oliver St. John to Lady Joan Barrington, 26 May 1630. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.198

life) is retourning to yow".²⁴ What was seen as a potentially risky match in view of the uncertain prospects of Mr. St.John, proved successful in this respect. He subsequently became the Lawyer General.

Sir Francis Harris seems also to have assumed responsibility for looking for a husband for Joan Meux. Just before Christmas 1628, he informed Lady Joan Barrington he had identified a possible match "ye distance of 3 or 4 score myles from London", and intended to report the man's "famely, & conditione & his estate" to Jane's father, Sir William Meux (Member of Parliament for Kingston, the Isle of Wight). Sir Francis understood that, as Sir Francis Barrington had recently died, Jane could expect a portion of £2000.²⁵ However, proceedings seem to have been aborted. In September 1629, Sir Francis again reported to Lady Joan he was undertaking preliminary searches for a match and sought re-notification of Jane's portion. He expressed his confidence of being able to secure a husband "of good note & qualitey" if Joan's father "would be p[er]suaded to harken to mach £1000 or £800 a yeere".²⁶

While Sir Francis undertook the groundwork to find a husband for Joan, Sir William Meux was keen to assert the grounds on which he would judge a match suitable. His overriding concerns were neither a handsome financial settlement nor the enhancement of the family's social status. Rather, he expressed reticence about two possible matches on the grounds that they would distance his daughter from him geographically. Conceding he must submit "to Gods most holy will", he stated, "I earnestly intreate that if itt be possible, some neerer match may be had, about her of freinds about london or any where betweene this and your La:". Further, he indicated he would be agreeable to his daughter "bestowing in Hartfordshire if there by hope of Religion and discretion". In a postscript, he reiterated his view more explicitly: "I had

24 Sir Thomas Barrington to Lady Joan Barrington, 13 May 1630. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.262

25 Sir Francis Harris to Lady Joan Barrington [23 December 1628] BL Egerton MS 2644, f.309

26 Sir Francis Harris to Lady Joan Barrington., September 1629. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.52

rather match her w[i]th less estate neere mee then w[i]th a greater farr off; and w[i]th som hopefull young lawyer if itt might please God soe bring itt to pass."²⁷

From this, it can be inferred that Sir William was willing for Jane to marry a younger son who, in lieu of inheriting his family's patrimony, could enhance his more modest inheritance through pursuing a career (see chapter five).²⁸ Sir William's flexibility on this issue would obviously have increased the chances of finding a husband for Jane. It was possibly quite unusual. Lawrence Stone has suggested even younger sons of the peerage were not generally regarded as appropriate suitors because of their inability to offer an attractive jointure. High demand for male heirs might have contributed to the rise of portions in relation to jointures during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with young women's families having to offer increasingly attractive incentives to win the comparatively small number of eldest sons.²⁹ Slater has speculated that a disproportionate number of women in relation to men in the seventeenth-century marriage market also led families to place a greater emphasis on their daughters' virginity as a means of enhancing their attractiveness as prospective brides.³⁰ Unfortunately, surviving Barrington and Aston correspondence gives little insight into how the families promoted their daughters.

It is noteworthy that Sir William Meux placed such importance on his daughter marrying a man who lived comparatively locally either to himself or to members of their extended family. A national marriage market, with London at its centre, had developed by the seventeenth century. Perhaps the Barringtons' proximity to the capital meant the development did not affect substantially the matches available to them, although it does not seem that Sir William was particularly keen to exploit the opportunities afforded by this.³¹ But he was not alone among the gentry and nobility in giving precedence to

27 Sir William Meux to Lady Joan Barrington, 21 September 1629. BL Mss. Egerton 2645, f.57

28 J. Thirsk 'Younger Sons in the Seventeenth Century' *History* 54 (1969) p.368

29 See Stone *Crisis of the Aristocracy* pp.648,643,646

30 M. Slater *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verneys of Claydon House* (London 1984)

p.82

31 See R. Houlbrooke *The English Family, 1450-1700* (Harlow 1984) p.29; V. Brodsky Elliott 'Single

factors other than the purely financial in assessing prospective marriage partners for his daughter. The Countess of Warwick explained a key reason for her family's acceptance of Thomas Barrington (eldest son of Sir John) as a match for her niece Ann Rich in 1664 - aside from his "being a very civil gentleman and, of a very good family, and having a good estate" (which would obviously have counted for much) - was the closeness of Hatfield Broadoak to the Rich family's estate in Lees, Essex.³² Reporting on her search for suitable husbands for her other two nieces, the Countess stressed her desire had been that they should marry into religious and virtuous families. She had accepted Henry St. John for Mary because he was of a "very orderly and religious family", and himself "good-natured and viceless". Conversely, she had rejected several suitors for Essex because they "were not viceless". She made clear her view that the suitability of a match could not be judged on a potential financial settlement alone: "I had taken a resolution that no fortune, though the greatest in the kingdom should be offered me, should be accepted, where the young man was not sober".³³ Her judgement of character was perhaps not quite what it might have been, however. At the least, the case highlighted the difficulty of judging future virtue (see chapter seven); as Viscount St. John, Henry was convicted in 1684 of murdering Sir William Estcourt.³⁴

On 26th September 1629, Sir Francis Harris informed Lady Joan Barrington that he had identified "a worthy Gent." for Joan Meux. The man in question was "a Co[u]nsellor at lawe" and apparently acquainted with Joan. However, progress could not be made until her portion had again been confirmed.³⁵ A further letter of 1st January 1630 reported on a possible match in Kent, to a man resident some twenty-five miles from London. The prospective suitor, who could not be named, was "of a good worthy

Women in the London Marriage Market: Age, Status and Mobility, 1598-1619' in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London 1981) pp.99-100

³² T. Crofton Croker (ed.) *The Autobiography of the Mary Countess of Warwick* (London 1848) p.31

³³ Ibid. p.35

³⁴ Ibid. pp.34-35,48

³⁵ Sir Francis Harris to Lady Joan Barrington, 26 September 1629. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.61

famely" and who, in turn, held the Barringtons in high esteem. In the event of his marrying Joan, the young man's father would settle upon him an estate yielding "£1000 p[er] an[um] & better" and give him £300 per annum on which to live and, more vaguely "so much to make his wife a Joynter", providing that Jane's portion amounted to £2000.³⁶

Again, it seems that negotiations floundered. On 2nd April 1630, Sir William Meux wrote to Lady Joan in desperation, stating, "in these partes good and fitt matches are so rare, as that itt makes me hopeless to bestowe her neere to mee". Moreover, he expressed concern that, the older his daughter became, "the harder itt will be to prefer her". Thus, he wrote, "the first [suitor] that come (having your approbation) I should be unwilling to refuse".³⁷ This suggests a shift in Sir William Meux's attitude from being quite choosy about whom his daughter married to a willingness to consider anyone within reason. It is not clear how old Joan was at the time a husband was being sought for her. However, Slater suggests that, by their mid-twenties, gentlewomen were regarded as past their most eligible.³⁸ Given Sir William's growing sense of urgency to find a husband for her, Jane was perhaps approaching this age.

On St. John's day 1630, Sir Francis informed Lady Joan he had identified the only son of Mr. Garrishe of Suffolk as yet another possible husband. Mr. Garrishe was "a Gent. of worthy family & my longe acquayntance" who welcomed the prospect of his son's marrying Joan. Again, he would require a portion of £2000 in return "for better than £2000 p[er] an[um], & all other landes as God shall inable him"; a jointure of £400 per annum; and "p[re]sent maytenance £300 a yeere". In Sir Francis's opinion, this offer was as "fayre as theise tymes are". He reported, moreover, that Mr. Garrishe's son was "a p[re]sentable man uppon my knowledge, w[i]th ye age of 22, &, hathe noe more

36 Sir Francis Harris to Lady Joan Barrington, 1 January 1630. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.130

37 Sir William Meux to Lady Joan Barrington, 2 April 1630. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.179

38 Slater *Family Life*. p.81

Sisters then two", one of whom was already married. His prospects were "great by his Uncle S[i]r Jo: Wendford", since he was the man's "next heire".³⁹

Despite these attributes, discussions did not proceed. The reasons why are not clear. A subsequent letter from Sir William Meux to his mother-in-law reported on progress in respect of a "match propounded for my daughter in Hampshire". Sir William had researched the "behaviour and parte" of the young man, a lawyer, and could find nothing objectionable. The prospective suitor's father "would settle noe land uppon him". But Sir William was optimistic that, if this matter could be resolved, the marriage should go ahead. However, he lacked enthusiasm because it would mean Joan's living "so farr distant she may be as a lost Child unto me".⁴⁰ Perhaps because of this, negotiations again broke down. In a letter of 4th April 1631, Sir William referred to another project, this time for Joan to marry a young man in Dorset. However, he reported, "Itt please God that my desires take not effect". In respect of another possible match proposed by Lady Joan, he raised objections about the physical distance that the marriage would cause between himself and his daughter, but again submitted "to him whoe governs all things".⁴¹ Whether a suitable husband was eventually found for Joan Meux is not evident from surviving correspondence.

What emerges from the Joan Altham and Joan Meux cases is that searching for a suitable match and negotiating an acceptable marriage financial settlement involved not just their parents, but wider family members and friends. Further, ultimate consent for a match to occur fell not to the young women's parents, but their grandparents. Neither Sir William and Elizabeth Masham nor Sir William Meux seem to have regarded themselves as having sufficient authority to sanction the pursual of negotiations to a stage at which the attainment of marriage would be almost certain. Their concern to obtain approval from

39 Sir Francis Harris to Lady Joan Barrington, 27 December 1630. BL Egerton MS 2645, f.230

40 Sir William Meux to Lady Joan Barrington, undated. BL Egerton MS 2650, f.324

41 Sir William Meux to Lady Joan Barrington, 4th April 1631, ERO D/DBa f.30/4

more senior family members indicates their awareness of the substantial repercussions that a marriage could have for their family's financial and social health.

It is also noteworthy Sir William Meux felt the need to assure his mother-in-law that, in expressing reservations about potential matches, he had his daughter's interests at heart.⁴² From this it can be inferred that Lady Joan Barrington was concerned - and was known to be concerned - that her grandchildren should be happily married, not just successfully married in terms of financial provision and social benefits. From the perspective of wider family relationships and lines of power, it is significant Sir William sought advice and approval from his mother-in-law. Whether he was able, and the extent to which he did, seek equivalent counsel and consent from his natural parents cannot be assessed from the Barrington correspondence. That the ultimate sanction of a match rested with Lady Joan, dowager of the Barrington family, rather than with the young women's fathers or with Sir Thomas Barrington, as the male head of the family, is striking. Both Elizabeth Masham's strong part in appraising the acceptability of proposed matches for her daughter and Lady Joan Barrington's sanctioning role bring into question assumptions that whom a gentlewoman married was necessarily controlled by her father or other male relatives.⁴³

Some concession seems to have been made to Joan Altham and Joan Meux's own preferences regarding wedlock at least to the extent they were able to refuse matches offered them. But Elizabeth Masham appears to have viewed her daughter's growing affection for Oliver St. John as an important consideration, not as an underlying rationale to proceed with negotiations. Such an approach is mirrored in the Countess of Warwick's management of her niece Essex Rich's marriage to Daniel Finch (son of the Lord Keeper and subsequent Earl of Nottingham). Once the Countess had cleared the match with her niece's near relatives, and had assurance of the young man's being an "ingenuous and civil

⁴² Sir William Meux to Lady Joan Barrington, 4th April 1631, ERO D/DBa f.30/4
⁴³ See V. Brodsky Elliott 'Single Women in the London Marriage Market'. pp.90-5

person", she informed Essex of the "conveniences" of the match and gave "her free choice to choose or not, to do as she liked or disliked". After Mr. Finch had "made his address" to Essex, she "consented to have him".⁴⁴

Negotiating the marriage of Sir Thomas Barrington and Lady Judith Smith

Correspondence between Sir Thomas Barrington and his parents regarding his marrying Lady Judith Smith shows how parental approval could be sought for a match made on the initiative of the couple themselves. Both widowed and with three and two young children respectively, Sir Thomas Barrington and Lady Judith Smith married in 1624. Letters from Sir Thomas to his father indicate that the impact of a second marriage on the future financial security of his children was a matter for concern (see chapter two). However, Sir Thomas assured his parents Lady Judith had neither "mooved nor desyred" terms for her own family that would disadvantage the Barringtons; rather, she had expressed a willingness to "leave it to yow & myselfe to doe wh[a]t we would, for my present daughters".⁴⁵ Although those acting on Lady Judith's behalf appreciated that provision had to be made for Sir Thomas' children, they were by no means neglectful of the interests of her sons:

"... Sir what you have declared to doe for your eldest Sonne I doe well a proove of as the first borne ought in reason to have a double portion ..."⁴⁶

It is apparent from an undated letter from Sir Thomas to his father that he and Judith wanted their families' consent even though they had agreed to marry. Of Judith, Sir Thomas asserted, "she sayeth she humbly desyres yt if we proceed we may have y[our] approbation and my mothers along with us". To convince his parents of the suitability of

⁴⁴ Crofton Croker *Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick*. pp.35-6; see chapter eight for further consideration of this approach

⁴⁵ Sir Thomas Barrington to Sir Francis Barrington Bt., 11 October 1624. BL Mss. Egerton 2644, f.218

⁴⁶ Draft regarding the marriage agreement for Sir Thomas Barrington and Lady Judith Smith, unsigned and undated, ERO, D/DbA F19

the match, he reported he had sent someone "who hath knowen her, & her education & courses of a child" to them to bear witness to Judith's good character. Sir Thomas reflected on the advantage of marrying a widow and, in particular, to being the "successor of a husband not superstitiously good". He stressed Sir George Smyth was "not a fitt halfe for [Judith], ye world knows well, yet she ever loved him & he her, but what was amiss in him is to her greater commendation". He appeared to feel no jealousy in respect of his prospective wife's first husband, but rather to perceive Judith's love for a dubious man as evidence of her personal virtue (see chapter eight).⁴⁷ Although Judith, herself, was the subject of some "foolish and false scandalls", Sir Thomas was confident that she would be vindicated once his parents were acquainted with "her goodness & wisdom".⁴⁸

Evidently excited at the prospect of marrying Judith, Sir Thomas excused what he feared might have been an impulsive and irrational letter to his father on the grounds his heart was "so full of perplexityes". In a letter written shortly before his wedding, he described marrying Judith as "this mayne occation wharein my life, creditt & comfort are inbarqued".⁴⁹ He hoped that Sir Henry Wallop, acting on Judith's behalf, would conclude the financial arrangements quickly, since he knew "so well how much, & how long my poore hart hath suffred under ye burden of desyre to consummate my happyness & my mrs present willingness". But, again, Sir Thomas was at pains to stress to his father that his love for Judith would not lead him to agree to a settlement that might compromise or disadvantage his family. Thus, while love formed the basis for the match, passion did not blind him to the substantial repercussions of his remarrying. To justify his having effectively reached a settlement without first seeking Sir Francis's approbation, Sir

47 Sir Thomas Barrington to Sir Francis Barrington [undated] BL Egerton MS 2644, f.209

48 Sir Thomas Barrington to Sir Francis Barrington [undated] BL Egerton MS 2644, f.217

49 Sir Thomas Barrington to Sir Francis Barrington, 11 October 1624. BL Egerton MS 2644, f.220

Thomas explained the terms were "so conscionable & reasonable" his father could not fail to approve them.⁵⁰

Sir Thomas was keen to establish good relations between his parents and prospective bride. He also saw their kindness to Judith as a way of strengthening his own relationship with her, stating "a letter of love to her sometimes may advantage me".⁵¹ He reported Judith was "mindful" of the virtues of her prospective parents-in-law, "speaking yo[u]r worth to everyone", and was confident Sir Francis and Lady Joan would not regret gaining Judith as a new daughter-in-law; they should derive "as much comfort & respect in her as you can looke for in any child".⁵² In turn, he reported Judith "hopes to find a new Mother" in Lady Joan "of whom she hath heard so much good". The importance of each partner securing the respect and liking of his or her prospective in-laws is reinforced by Sir Thomas' efforts to enamour himself with Judith's family. He asked his father to provide him with some venison that he might entertain the members of the household in which Judith lived; such a gesture should work to his advantage, since "they all love venison so well".⁵³

As the eldest son and heir of Sir Francis and Lady Joan Barrington, Sir Thomas had a particular duty to secure parental approval for his marriage intentions. However, a similar sense of obligation seems to have registered strongly with his younger brother, John. From the tone of John's letters, it can be inferred he would not have married Marie Pinaule, a French woman, if his parents' approval not been forthcoming. In a missive dated 12th April 1621, he repeated a plea for their consent for the match:

"And now again I do most earnestly intreate you to give way unto my Affection, without which grant of yours I shall esteame myself the most miserablest man on earth, the

50 Ibid. f.218

51 Sir Thomas Barrington to Sir Francis Barrington [undated] BL Egerton MS 2644, f.213

52 Sir Thomas Barrington to Sir Francis Barrington [undated] BL Egerton MS 2644, f.217

53 Ibid. f.217

contentment I have in this love being so greate that the being deprived thereof would make all other things as nothing unto me ..."54

While dependent on retaining his parents' goodwill to guarantee his inheritance, John's concern for their approval also suggests his wish to prove his respect for them and to show due regard to their feelings. In putting forward arguments in favour of the match, he stressed his regard "both to religion, meanes and parentage", and Marie's offering a portion "near upon a thousand pounds besides future hopes". Further, he pledged "to live in such a manner and fashion as shall be pleasing" to his parents, and indicated his willingness to return to live in England with his wife if this was what they wanted.⁵⁵ Correspondence has not survived to confirm whether John Barrington secured his parents' approval, but it seems to have been given and the marriage took place. John continued to seek permission and direction from his parents for his actions in other significant matters. His letters to Lady Joan, after his father's death, sought her approval for his choice of career, again indicating the authority she held over her family in her years as dowager.

In seeking parental consent for their marriage choices, Sir Thomas and John Barrington acted in line with the advice of the marital conduct books (see chapter eight). But passing references in the Barrington family's correspondence offer brief insights into other high-born children who showed less regard for family interests. Judith Barrington reported to her mother-in-law that a daughter of the Earl of Bedford had married the Lord Doncaster "against his father the Earl of Carlisle's liking", the match having been made viable by the young man's grandfather, the Earl of Northwhich, settling "al his owen lands" upon him. In addition, the Earl of Bedford's other daughter was due to marry the son of the Earl of Bristow when he returned from travelling, "theare being settled a private affection between ye youngue Couple".⁵⁶ From these examples it seems that familial love for

⁵⁴ Trans. G.A. Lowndes (ed.) 'The History of the Barrington Family'. *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*. Vol.1, New Series (Colchester 1878) p.25

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.25

⁵⁶ Letter from Lady Judith Barrington to Lady Joan Barrington [undated] BL Egerton MS 2646, f.21

children could override pragmatic concerns to secure matches that were firmly in the interests of the families affected, particularly when members of the extended family took conciliatory action. It is likely that families realised a couple's mutual affection formed a critical basis for trying to ensure their inheritance would be preserved. In this sense, whether a couple loved one another was as practical a concern as whether they formed a good match in more straightforwardly financial terms (see chapter ten).

The courtship of Herbert Aston and Katherine Thimelby

The courtship of Herbert Aston and Katherine Thimelby (also a Catholic), provides a fascinating example of how a match could flourish outside the parameters of formal familial control. However, the match was fostered by Herbert's sister, and its resolution again depended on the couple's securing approval from their families. Surviving letters show that Herbert had encouraged his sister, Constance Fowler, to correspond with Katherine Thimelby to lessen her loneliness during his absence from England on an ambassadorial mission to Spain on behalf of Charles I. An intense friendship developed between the two women. Constance then became instrumental in promoting a romance between her brother and Katherine. The following quotation, taken from a lengthy letter from Constance to Herbert, illustrates her strong belief that marriage should be based on mutual love:

"... I dare sware ther was never tow creatures soe like, soe perfectly alike as you two are in disposissions and natures. Oh tis a thousand pittyes you should be parted; she is just you, and soe you her, that may I be miserable if I doe not thinke you will be the happyest lovers in the world, if you have the happy fortune to mach with one another, the world might justly then envye you, but could not show your equells."⁵⁷

Although confident Herbert and Katherine were the perfect match, she knew their marrying remained uncertain until the union received familial consent. She sought assurance from her brother that he would establish whether their father would be able to

⁵⁷ Clifford Tixall Letters. p.124

make available "some fortune" to make the match attractive to the Thimelby family, stating that if he truly loved Katherine he would do his utmost to secure an acceptable jointure.⁵⁸ In a postscript in an earlier letter, Constance revealed that Katherine's brother, Sir John Thimelby, wished her to marry "a gentleman harde by him, in the counttre". The prospect of such a development led Constance to write, "I shall be afflicted to the soule if it prove so indeed".⁵⁹ She also warned Herbert that Katherine had had to make known to some members of her family her feelings for him to deter them from proceeding with negotiations with his rival's family. She expressed optimism, however, that the Thimelbys would place Katherine's personal contentment above securing a lucrative match and implored Herbert to inform her as soon as he had news of securing an agreement. Constance's reward for her own part in nurturing her brother's relationship with Katherine would be his "sending ... the most long'd for newes of your being sure to have Mrs Thimelby".⁶⁰ A successful resolution was achieved. On 19th October 1638, Lord Walter Aston wrote to Katherine from Spain, welcoming her into the Aston family, assuring his new daughter-in-law that, although members of the Aston family were distanced from one another physically, they were "united in trew affection".⁶¹

The intensity of feeling that Constance Fowler invested in the successful outcome of her matchmaking is striking. She believed (or was at least keen to give the impression) that her own happiness was dependent upon Herbert and Katherine's marrying, in addition to being sure their own future contentment hinged upon their union. Constance made no reference in her letters to her own marriage to Walter Fowler, making it impossible to know whether she enjoyed the kind of relationship with her husband that she was so keen to secure for her brother and friend. Her letters contain extensive eulogies based on the couple's complementary virtue and mutual love. Surviving letters from Katherine to Herbert, written both before and after they were married, do not dispel the image of their

58 Ibid. pp.124-25

59 Ibid. pp.102-103

60 Ibid. pp.124,123,127

61 Letter from Lord Walter Aston to Katherine Aston, 19 October 1638. BL Add.MS. 36,452, f.36

strong emotional attachment to one another. In a missive written before their marriage - and presumably once the union was assured - Katherine made clear the depth of her love for Herbert. His presence negated her capacity for sadness, while declarations of his love led her to forget "knowledge of my unworthenes".⁶² During Herbert's physical absence, the arrival of his letters brought her joy. Celebrating the receipt of letters from him on two consecutive days, she reflected such good fortune could not last. However, she took solace from the belief this was simply evidence of earthly imperfection in contrast to the perfection to be found in heaven.⁶³ Katherine could accept Herbert's absence from her when this was caused by her being with his sister Constance, given the deep affection that she had for her future sister-in-law. Nevertheless, she urged Herbert to try to be with her again as soon as possible, stressing, "How infinite a time will it seme till I se you: for lovers hours are full eternity. Doctor Dunn sayd this, but I thinke it". She explained the reprieve from her aching heart that sleep provided; then she dreamed she was "talking with him".⁶⁴

Katherine expressed incredulity that she could have gained the love of Herbert - "How can the unworthiest to be lov'd by the most deserving?" - and that he had shown himself to be "so esy to be won" by her. She was anxious that, should he learn her true nature, she would lose his love and thus appealed, "May I be what you thinke I am, or may you ever mistake me as you doe". Should her love for him ever dwindle, she asked "may I find your hate which is the greatest curse I can think of". She was confident, however, that "thers nothing I can imagen so impossible as that I could love any but you, or think any thing hapines but your love". Frustrated that the written word could not convey the depth of her love for Herbert, she stressed her letters could only hint at her real feelings. She stating simply, "There was never so much sayd in so little as this letter doth. I think that I never write so ill to any as to you: think the rest".⁶⁵

⁶² Clifford *Tixall Letters*. p.142

⁶³ Ibid. p.143

⁶⁴ Ibid. pp.146,147,142,144,145

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.146

While Katherine Thimelby's eloquence was perhaps unusual, her explicit expression of her love for her future husband was less so. Her letters indicate the influence of contemporary literature and drama, in which concepts of passionate love abounded.⁶⁶ That she married into a family fond of literature is evident from the poetry written and collected by the Astons, while her direct reference to John Donne's work shows her existing interest in the art. Not all couples of Katherine and Herbert's social standing would have had the opportunity to develop such an affection for one another before marriage (see chapter seven). Nevertheless, their case shows how some couples chose one another on the basis of mutual affection, were open in expressing their love, and gained familial sanction for their relationship.⁶⁷ Both Constance Fowler's perceptions of the proper grounds for marriage and Katherine's love for Herbert belie the assumption that primarily pragmatic attitudes towards marriage pervaded thinking within the gentry. But Katherine and Herbert's union was also pragmatic, in the sense that both were Catholic and appeared to have come from similar backgrounds. It seems likely that members of the Aston family would have wished to marry fellow recusants, although surviving letters do not give an impression of the importance placed upon this.

Concluding remarks

The Aston and Barrington correspondence illuminates many aspects of the machinations of marriage formation and the nature of marriage for the gentry in early seventeenth-century England. The letters show that forging marriages did not necessarily involve coldly imposed parental control to achieve the most lucrative agreement. Instead, a broad range of factors, including parental love and regard for a couple's future happiness, determined whether a match was regarded as worth pursuing. Moreover, consent and financial support could be obtained by couples who forged privately-made matches based on mutual love. The process of searching for, securing and sanctioning a marriage was not

⁶⁶ Macfarlane *Marriage and Love*. p.185

⁶⁷ See chapter ten for further examples

simply a matter for parents, but involved a large number of family members and agents. Further, the approval of a match did not necessarily take the expected form of patriarchal, or even parental, authority. Rather, it could involve senior female family members, negating the argument that marriage formation was a matter for the nuclear family.⁶⁸

There is no ostensible difference in the Barrington and Aston families' approach to marriage formation that can be attributed to their respective religious persuasions. If there is a difference, the Aston and Thimelby families seemed more willing to support the independently-made liaison of Herbert and Katherine than were the Barrington family to countenance similar behaviour by its members. It is difficult to substantiate this, however. The Aston correspondence offers no information on the financial underpinnings of Herbert's and Katherine's match, which obviously could have gone a long way to promoting it to each family. The impact of English Catholic families having less choice of marriage partners is also difficult to gauge, but might also have been a significant factor. It would be rash to infer from the two families that Catholics were more accepting of independent matches than their Protestant counterparts. But it is clear that the Astons were happy to collude in a match based on love because it had other positive attributes to promote it. What emerges from the Aston letters goes against Chrisman's findings, while the balance of power and lack of affective relationships that Slater has inferred from the Verney manuscripts is not replicated in that of the Barringtons.⁶⁹ The latter family's correspondence shows that members forged close bonds with one another based on genuine affection and respect. This highlights the importance of being sensitive to the nuances of sources (not least, the use of language) and contextualising insights gained from individual families.

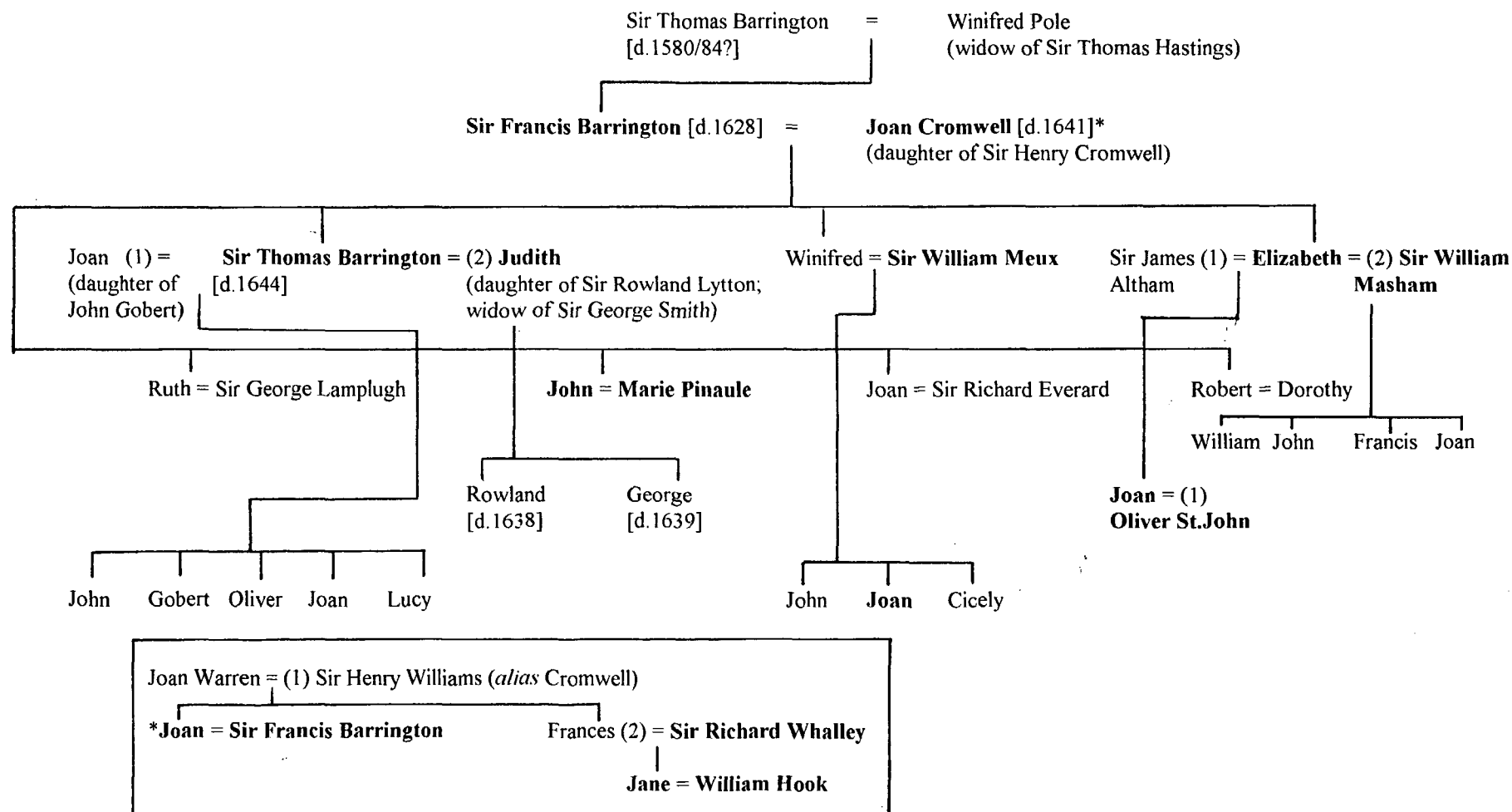
⁶⁸ M.J.M. Ezell *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (London 1987)

p.34

⁶⁹ M. Chrisman 'Family and Religion in Two Noble Families: French Catholic and English Puritan' *Journal of Family History* 8 (1983) pp.190-210; Slater *Family Life*.

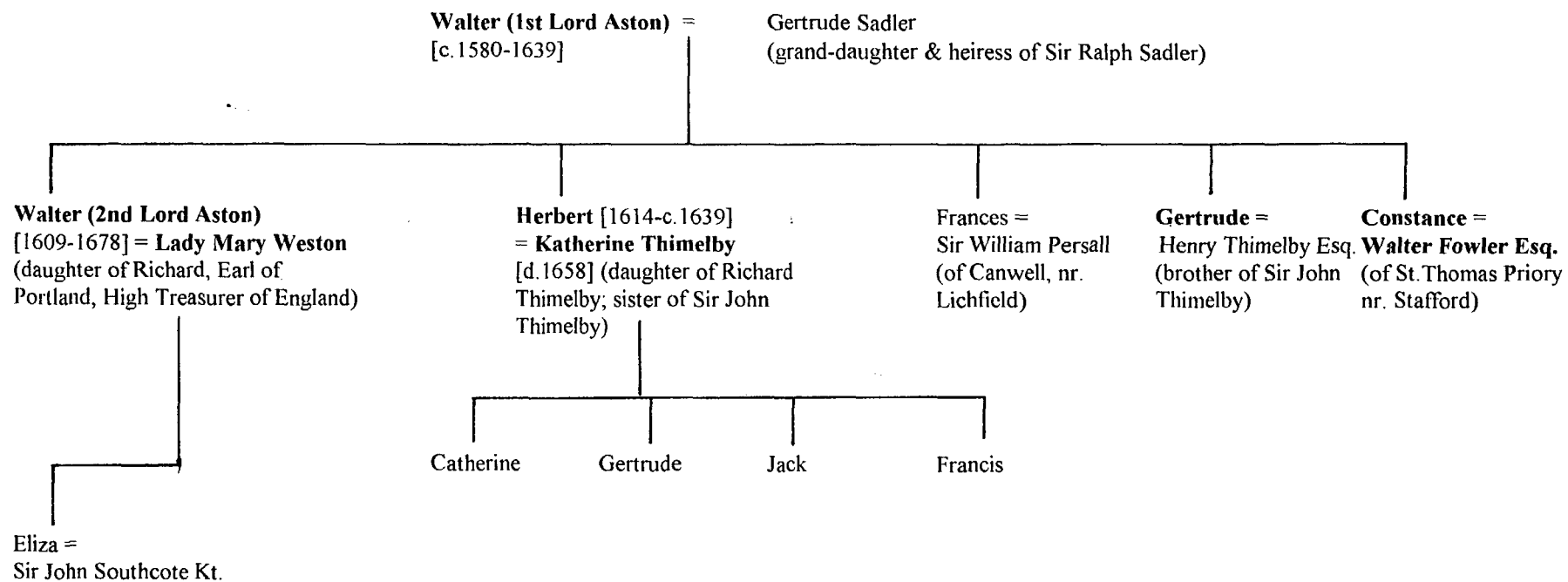
Barrington family - simplified family tree

Family members who wrote letters that are extant, to whom surviving correspondence was sent, or who are referred to directly in extant letters referred to in the chapter are highlighted in bold.



Aston family - simplified family tree

Family members who wrote letters that are extant, to whom surviving correspondence was sent, or who are referred to directly in extant letters referred to in the chapter are highlighted in bold.



Chapter seven

Three letters on marriage formation

The three letters considered in this chapter are each concerned with forging marriages. They were written by Richard Young to Sir John Thynne on arrangements for the latter's son to marry Joan Hayward, daughter of Sir Rowland (1575); Roger Williams to Lady Joan Barrington on his name being linked with that of Lady Joan's niece, Jane Whalley (1629); and Margaret Cavendish as part of her published collection of *Sociable Letters* (1664). They differ substantially in their style, tone, format and approach, making them a useful sample on which to base a close consideration of marriage negotiations and related contemplations. That they approach the subject from different perspectives and for different purposes helps us to build a picture of contemporary views and to gain further insights into decision-making and decision makers.

Young's and Williams' letters concern liaisons that had the potential to end in marriage. That by Cavendish is an essentially abstract treatment of marriage formation and relations between the sexes, although "Mrs. L.A.", the supposed inspiration for the letter, could have been an actual woman in search of a husband (see chapter one). The match depicted by Young ended in marriage; that aspired to by Williams did not. The purpose and tone of the letters were therefore very different. Williams was a suitor, hoping to advance an independently-pursued courtship. Young was a messenger, reporting on his negotiations between the Thynne and Hayward families from a relatively dispassionate position. The purpose of Williams' letter, however ambivalently expressed, was to gain approval from Lady Joan Barrington to proceed with the match. Young, in contrast, was dealing with a prospective marriage initiated by John and Joan's parents. The couple had yet to meet when Young wrote. Margaret Cavendish's approach was wholly secular, proposing a cynical fatalism about who married whom. Young and Williams' letters have strong religious overtones, conveying a fundamental belief that God - as well as key family members - had to condone a match to ensure its propriety (see chapters eight and nine). In

Cavendish's world, men were free to marry whomever they chose, while women were free to marry whomever they deserved and could attract.

The letters' intended readers were also different. Cavendish's missive was composed expressly for publication, to attract as big a readership as possible and, essentially, to entertain. Young and Williams wrote for specific individuals, although possibly expected their letters to be seen by others (hence their sometimes covert expression). Unsurprisingly, Cavendish's tone varied from that of Young and Williams. While the two men were writing from a subordinate position, Cavendish's implied reader was an intimate female friend. It was on this pretext that she justified the content and tone of the collection of *Sociable Letters*. The chapter considers the three letters in turn. Each is transcribed to illustrate the points made. The emergent common themes and key nuances are considered in the concluding section.

Letter from Richard Young to Sir John Thynne [29 July 1575]¹

... I have spoken with Sir Roland Hayward [Haward] whom I do find desirous to match with your son, as I assure you I do think he will do more for this daughter than you desire of him, for she is his darling, and the mother is so desirous of the match that she hath sent me divers times desiring me to request you not to be too strait with her husband, for she saith you may rule him as you will with reason, and she hath been in hand with her husband for the matter, and he told her that you did demand all the chiefest of things he hath. Whereupon I told her you did demand it no otherwise but after their decease and to have it assured to your son and daughter and their heirs of their bodies. Further she is in hand with me to know if you would have your son to keep house of himself, that she might see their government in her lifetime, I saying I thought you would be glad to have it so, for that should be your comfort as well as hers saying your desire is to have them in Shropshire and would be glad to see them placed at Caus Castle, and that you would strain yourself in helping to repair the same, the which my Lady did like well of, for she is desirous to have the matter ended. And fain she would have a sight of your son that her husband should not know of it, and she gave me her daughter's age, wht which I thought good to send you. She was baptised the 28th day of August 1558 so that she shall be 17 years old at August next. I showed my Lady the letter, you sent to me and so I did Sir Rowland who did perceive did like well of it. And where my Lady was desirous to have seen your son, I declared to her that your mind was first to conclude with Sir Rowland. That being done, your son and her daughter to have conference together, and as God shall dispose their hearts and minds to unite and knit the knot together with your consent in the fear of God. And unless the two parties could the one so like of the other and they themselves to be as joyful as the father, there should be no displeasure but to part in great friendship on both sides. For as I did perceive as reason is, they would their daughter so like. So I said you were of the same mind for your son yielding a good reason to the not liking, and this with many other words we departed, she desiring me to help end the matter.

I assure you the young gentlewoman is very wise and virtuously brought up. I talked with her and demanded of her how she did lik of you and your son; of you she answered she had heard and she saw in you to be a grave and wise man, wherefore she did like the better of your son, for she thought he could not digress from your bringing him up as she hath heard you have done. But to answer me of liking of your son in marriage, she said she would not nor could say nothing, for she had not spoken with him, but I do put

¹ Transcribed in A. Wall (ed.) *Two Elizabethan Women: The Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575-1611*. Wiltshire Record Society Vol. XXXVIII (Devizes 1983) pp.54-55

trust in God and in my good father that God will direct my heart not to dislike. But in the end she told me that she never heard of none yet that she had any affiance to so much as to your son, for the good report she had of you and of him for that he was no roister. This I have troubled you with a long letter, desiring you to write to Sir Rowland, for I do not doubt but you shall agree; this I rest to trouble your worship, desiring God to assist you with His holy spirit with much increase of worship.

Your servant to command

Richard Young.

Cautious reporting

Richard Young was an agent of Sir John Thynne, who wrote from London to his master at the family seat of Longleat.² His letter reported on negotiations he had been undertaking to secure a match between Sir John's eldest son and heir and the daughter of Sir Rowland and Lady Joan Hayward. Young was effectively an intermediary between the two families, obviously acting to promote and defend the interests of the Thynnes. Discussions are likely to have begun about a month before the letter was written. They came to fruition on 26th February 1576. Joan Hayward had been identified as a possible wife for John Thynne following the collapse of attempts to marry him to Sir James Marvin's daughter, Lucy. These negotiations had broken down with great animosity between the two families once the Thynnes had discovered that the lands that would form Lucy's portion were entailed and limited to the Marvin family name. John had been reluctant to break off with Lucy, and had only done so when his father threatened to disinherit him. It was thus following a disagreeable turn of events that the Thynnes embarked on new discussions with the Haywards. The Thynnes were a gentry family with court connections and substantial power in Wiltshire. They evidently saw marrying John off to the daughter of a rich merchant as a way of expanding their lands and extending their influence. Joan Hayward - third daughter of Sir Rowland, a merchant, alderman and Lord Mayor of London, by his first wife, Joan - fitted the requirements well.³

Contrary to the impression given by Young, the negotiations were not smooth-running. The financial arrangements proved difficult and were not resolved until after John and Joan were married. Sir Rowland Hayward made a formal promise to give the couple Caus Castle on 27th August 1575 (alluded to in the letter), a property he had bought a short time before from Lord Stafford. However, with the latter resistant to yielding possession, John and Joan Thynne spent the first four years of their marriage with no home of their

² Wall *Two Elizabethan Women*. p.54

³ Ibid. pp.xviii-xix

own. This added to mutual problems with their in-laws. They took over Longleat House, part of the Thynne estate in 1580.⁴

At one level, Young's letter can be read simply as a missive to his master reporting on progress. The parents on both sides (that is, Sir Rowland and Lady Joan Hayward and Sir John - no mention is made of John's stepmother, Dorothy) are presented as keen for the marriage to occur. The only real hurdle identified is whether John and Joan would feel able to foster sufficient mutual affection to sustain a marriage. But the letter is also telling about how matches were negotiated between gentry families; the levers of sanction and consent; relationships between agents and the families on whose behalf they acted; and the strategies deployed by young people presented with the prospect of marrying someone whom they had never met. It is not especially significant whether the letter presents a full or accurate picture of progress. It constitutes a personal narrative, the defining strands of which are what the writer himself had done. These are marked by first-person verbal phrases: "I have spoken", "I do find", "I do think", "I told", "I thought", "I showed", "I did", and "I talked". Such a structure and style no doubt reflected Young's concern to demonstrate he was making things happen and was in control. Given that earlier negotiations for a match for John Thynne had foundered, Young was likely to have been under particular pressure to help achieve another match. But by preceding statements with declarations such as "I do find" and "I do think", he was perhaps also trying to cover himself should negotiations break down, keen to show he could only report on his perception of the situation, not affirm how the state of play really was, or how matters might end. Marriage formation was too volatile a business for bold assertions.

The letter tracks Young's various conversations with members of the Hayward family, together with some secondhand reports of conversations that had purportedly occurred within the family. Young had apparently spoken in confidence to Sir Rowland,

4 Ibid. p.xix-xx

Lady Joan and Joan herself respectively and provided a seemingly close reportage of what had ensued. It is possible that near verbatim accounts of negotiations were required of him by Sir John Thynne, not least because the precise nuances of the Hayward family members' responses might have had quite substantial implications for how the match progressed. The letter suggests the families were agreed that the couple should be settled in their own household but should remain relatively close to each set of parents. It would be to the "comfort" of all concerned that Caus Castle should be made habitable for them. Their being given the wherewithal to form their own household was equated clearly with their having governance, in keeping with a broader analogy between political power and household autonomy (see chapter two). Young had indicated to Lady Hayward his understanding that Sir John would "strain" to help to achieve this common goal. Such a verb might have been tactical (if, indeed, it formed a faithful reporting of his conversation), to indicate Sir John's preparedness to extend himself beyond the bounds of reasonable effort to meet the needs of his son and prospective daughter-in-law. In so doing, Young - and Sir John - perhaps hoped to secure more in grateful reciprocity and affability from the Hayward family.

Not surprisingly, the letter contains several references to aspirations for the successful conclusion of the negotiations. Lady Hayward was "desirous to have the matter ended" and wanted Young "to help end the matter". This suggests a focus on settling the match, rather than the longer term happiness of the couple once married. If Lady Hayward's words were reported accurately, then she might have perceived settlement of the marriage as the culmination of her daughter's life, not the beginning of it, or her step (at the age of seventeen) into adulthood. It seems more likely, however, that the phrasing simply reflected Young's perspective.

The letter illustrates a common view about the proper grounds on which a marriage should be based: that it should be sanctioned by God; receive the consent of the couple's parents; and be affirmed by the couple feeling at least the potential to develop an affection

for one another once married (see chapter eight). John and Joan were not necessarily expected to love one another at the point of marriage. However, because the conditions of divine sanction and parental consent were understood to have been met, there seems to have been the expectation among all concerned (albeit in a somewhat qualified manner by Joan Hayward herself) that the third condition would be met almost as a natural corollary. Careful matchmaking by God and parents should ensure "their hearts and minds" would "unite" (see chapter eight). At the same time, the possibility John and Joan would not warm to one another was openly acknowledged, and there seems to have been common agreement the match should not proceed if they actually disliked one another. They seem to have had at least a limited degree of choice. If nothing else, forcing their marriage would make the match foolish for their families; the "great friendship" between them should not be jeopardised.

Such assurance from the Hayward family was probably of strong importance to Sir John Thynne, given the recent breakdown in relations with the Marvin family. It seems that John Thynne and Lucy Marvin had been able to meet during the course of negotiations between their two families, resulting in their having developed a strong and, as it transpired, unhelpful affection for one another. That Sir John had had to resort to drastic threats to persuade his son to break off the match once it had become clear his family's interests would not be well served by the marriage, the Thynnes were evidently keen John should not even meet Joan until the financial matters had been settled.⁵

Young's use of language is telling about his attitude towards the parties involved in the negotiations. His opening sentence to Sir John - that he found Sir Rowland Hayward "desirous to match with your son" - is intriguingly ambiguous. Although obviously meant to convey Sir Rowland's keenness for his daughter to marry John, the direct reference to himself suggests that the match was seen very much as the two families joining (or, at

⁵ Ibid. p.xviii

least, on Young's part). As its figurehead, Sir Rowland personified the family's actions and interests (see chapters two and three). In this sense, his daughter was simply a pawn for achieving a union of the two families. At the same time, it was clear in Young's mind that Joan was her father's "darling", from which it can be inferred that Sir Rowland wanted both to ensure her happiness and benefit his family (see chapter eight).⁶

The letter includes a detailed account of Young's conversation with Joan Hayward. Of particular note is the use of the term "affiance", a word not found in other correspondence. Again, we cannot know whether Young relayed the actual words of Joan herself or whether he paraphrased or elaborated. Nevertheless, the term has an interesting combination of meanings: pledging oneself to marry another, having faith in a person, and an intimate relationship or affinity with another person. All have currency in the context of the reported conversation. It is particularly striking that Joan is purported, at least, to have developed a strong faith (and perhaps an affinity) for John on the basis of his father's "good report" and his own reputation of being "no roister". Joan had evidently been the subject of previous negotiations regarding matches. Young's report, "she never heard of none yet that she had any affianced of so much as to" John Thynne is telling. The inclusion of "yet" suggests she was not confident she would marry John. Moreover, the phrase "never heard of none" seems to indicate she was used not to meeting her prospective husbands and had become accustomed to making judgements about whom she might marry on the basis of their personal reputation and that of their family.

Young's sense of hierarchy is revealed in his use of language. He referred to Sir Rowland by name three times, but used none of the other parties' names at all: John Thynne is referred to as "your son"; Joan Hayward is variously called "his daughter", "her daughter" and "the young gentlewoman"; and Lady Joan Hayward is called "the mother" and "my Lady". Dorothy Thynne, John's stepmother, is not mentioned. The text is rich with

⁶ See L. Stone *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford 1966) regarding parents' tendency to set the size of a daughter's portion according to levels of affection

words relating to expressions of wanting, affection and human virtue. "Desire" and its derivations are used most frequently: "desirous" four times, "desire" itself twice and "desiring" once. "Like" is used three times, while "liking", "not to dislike", and "no displeasure" are each used once. No stronger words than these are deployed to refer to the hoped for affection between John and Joan. Moreover, it is simply expected that their happiness should match that claimed for Sir Rowland and Lady Joan at the prospect of their daughter marrying into the Thynne family. While it is hoped John and Joan's "hearts and mindes" would be joined, the desired result was simply that they would "so like of the other" that "they themselves" might be "as joyful as the father". From this it can be inferred that neither family wanted the marriage to be fuelled by an extreme of emotion (see chapter ten).

Young's letter gives the impression he viewed the match purely as a business venture for the Thynne family, although one that depended, in part, on emotion and, more heavily, on maintaining good relations between the two families. Words and phrases betray his approach: the proposed marriage is referred to as "the matter" three times and there is reference to the couple having "conference together" and, subsequently, "government". Such language also indicates just how serious a business marriage-making was for families.

Letter from Roger Williams to Lady Joan Barrington, undated⁷

Madame,

Your ladiship may wonder at this unwonted absence! And also aske what meanes this paper deputie? Give me leave (deare madame) to say with David to his brother in the field; is there not a cause? A just, happily a knowne and open cause, I am sure, to your ladiship (who as an angell of God discerneth wisely) a known and open cause. Many and often speeches have long fluttered and flowne abroad concerning your ladiship's neere kinswoman and my unworthy selfe. What little eare I have given that way (further then I have hearkened after your ladiship's mind) all that know me here doe know. Yet like a rowling snowball or some flowing streame, the report extends and gathers stronger and stronger, which causes me this day to stand behind the hangings and not be seene any way coutenancing so great a busines which happily may want strength to bring it forth to see the light. It is the command of the God of wisdom, by that wise king Salomon: establish thy thoughts by counsell. I presume, therefore, to consult (as most of right I acknowledge I ought) with the soonest of our ladiship, especially considering her loving and strong affection together with the report as strong abroad.

Good Madame, may it please you thne to take notice I acknowledge my selfe altogether unworthy and unmeete for such a proposition. The neerenes of her blood to your ladiship and godly flowrishing branches hath forc't me to confesse her portion in that regard to be beyond compare, invalueable. Yet many feares have much possest me longe. I have to discover that sinceritie and Godlines which makes the lord himselfe to like his creature, and must make me, if ever. I have receaved some good testimonialls from mine own experience, more from others, not the least from your good ladiship's selfe. Objections have come in about her spirit, much accused for passionate and hastie, rash and unconstant, other feares about her present condition, it being some indecorum for her to condescend to my low ebb. There I something stick, but were all this cleared there is one barr not likely to be broken, and that is the present estate of us both: that portion it hath pleased God to allot her (as I heare) is not for present and happily (as things now stand in England) shall never be by us enjoyed.

For mine owne part, it is well knowne (though I would gladly conceale my selfe) how a gracious God and tender conscience (as Balak said to Balaam) have kep me back from my honour and preferment. Beside many former offers and that lade New England

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Letter from Roger Williams to Lady Joan Barrington [April? 1629] BL Egerton Mss.2643, f.1

call, I have had since 2 severall livings proffered me, each of them 100 li per annum, but as things yet stang among us I see not how any great meanes and I snall meete that way. Nor doe I seeke, nor shall I be drawne on any tearmes, to part (even to my last parting) from Oates so long as any competencie can be raised and libertie afforded. I shall impart the utmost to your ladiship (moer punctually that ever yet to any). Besides this meanes I no from hence enjoy, litle is there that I can call mine. After the death of an aged loving mother, amongst some other children, I may expect (though for the present she be close and will not promise) some 20 li or 20 marck per annum. At hand (undisposed of) I have some 7 score pieces and a litle (yet costly) studie of bookes. Thus possessing all things have I nothing, yet moe then God owes me, or then my blessed saviour had himself.

Poore yet as I am I have some few offers at present, one put into my hand, person and present, portion worthy. Yet stand they still at dore, and shall, untill the fairest end the lord shall please to give to this shall come to light. I have bene bold to open to your ladiship the whole anatomie of the busines. To wrong your precious name and answer her kind love with want would be like gall to all the hony of my life, and marr my marriage joyes. The kind affection of your deare ladiship and worthy niece is of better merit and desert. I shall add for the present I know none in the world I more affect, and (had the lord bene pleased to say amen in those other regards) should doubles have fully answered (if not exceeded) her affection.

But I have learn'd another lesson, to still my soule as a weaned childe and give offence to none. I have learn'd to keepe my studie and pray to God of heaven (as oft as I doe pray) for the everlasting peace and well fare of your kind ladiship, whoes soule and comfort is in the number of my greatest cares. The lord, that hath carried you from the wombe to gray heires, crowne those grey heires by making your last dayes (like the close of some sweete harmonie) your best: fruitfull (like Sarah) in old age, outshining all those starrs that shine about you, going downe in peace, rising in glory in the armes of your dearest saviour; to which everlasting armes he often commits your soul and yours who is

The unworthiest (though faythfull) of all that truely serve and honour you

Roger Williams

Desperate measures

Roger Williams' letter to Lady Joan Barrington concerns the linking of his name with that of her niece, Jane Whalley. At the time that the letter was probably written (April 1629), Williams was chaplain to the Masham family at Masham Manor, High Laver in Essex. Sir William and Lady Elizabeth Masham were Lady Joan Barrington's son-in-law and daughter. Their household was about six miles from Lady Joan's at Hatfield Broadoak (her husband, Sir Francis, had died in 1628). Williams, a puritan, had become the Mashams' chaplain between December 1628 and February 1629 on leaving Pembroke College, Cambridge. Jane Whalley was the daughter of Lady Joan's deceased sister, Frances, and her brother-in-law, Richard Whalley. On her mother's death, she had gone to live with her aunt, her father believing that this would increase her prospects of finding a good husband. A decision must have been made at some point that she should live with her cousin, Elizabeth Masham. She had thereby come to reside in the same household as Roger Williams. A relationship had evidently developed between them. Williams was not, however, regarded by her extended family as the kind of young man with whom she should be matched.⁸ It can be inferred that this was because he lacked sufficient family resources, since his vocation, in itself, would not have precluded him from consideration. Jane subsequently married another clergyman, Mr. Hook, to her family's contentment.⁹

Williams' letter shows his strong awareness of the power and importance of language. Late in his life, he wrote, "The Sense and Meaning is in all Speech and Writing (in our own and other languages) the very Speech and Writing it self", from which LaFantasie has observed Williams had a typically puritan "obsession" with words.¹⁰ However, the language used by the clergyman has strong parallels with that deployed in a

⁸ W. LaFantasie (ed.) *The Correspondence of Roger Williams* Vol.1 (Hanover & London 1988) p.3; G.A. Lowndes (ed.) 'History of the Barrington Family' *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*. Vol.1, new series (Colchester 1878) p.34

⁹ Letter from William Hook to Lady Joan Barrington, 25 May 1630 BL Egerton MS 2645, f.196; letter from Jane Hook to Lady Joan Barrington, 28 December [1630] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.112

¹⁰ LaFantasie *Correspondence of Roger Williams*. pp.xxvii-xxviii

letter of the same year by an unnamed recusant son to his mother.¹¹ Williams' letter is complex in its structure, allusions and arguments. It reads essentially as a damage limitation exercise, forming the chaplain's attempt to explain his side of a story about which he knew Lady Joan Barrington was already aware and displeased. Williams tried several lines of defence, presenting himself variously as the unfortunate victim of gossip, a worthy suitor to Lady Joan's niece, and accepting of defeat. Likewise, he promoted himself both as a respected clergyman whose personal and spiritual qualities compensated for this lack of wealth and as someone who had sufficient resources, both actual and prospective, to make him an acceptable match for Jane. Most strikingly, he proffered the view that Jane Whalley's having entertained his attentions indicated she deserved a husband of inferior rank. Through this tortuous construction of arguments, the letter highlights factors that families typically considered in evaluating the merits of a possible match, indicating that these were not simply financial (see chapter six). At least implicitly, it also refers to the qualities deemed desirable in a prospective wife, as well as showing the substantial power that women could hold in family spheres (see chapter four).

The letter reveals Williams' awkward combination of roles as chaplain to the extended Barrington family and aspiring suitor to one of its members. His status as a spiritual mentor blurred his relationship with Lady Joan, the letter's scriptural allusions appearing to be there as much for her religious edification as to explain the situation that had arisen with Jane Whalley. Thus, Williams appears not just as a suitor hoping to 'woo' the significant family member of the woman he wished to marry. He had more than amorous ambitions to lose. Unlike the Thynne and Hayward families, he could not simply forget the whole business if his wishes to marry Jane were thwarted. His very livelihood and reputation were at stake. Even though he had apparently taken the bold action of pursuing Jane Whalley without her family's sanction, his letter indicates that he did not feel

¹¹ Transcribed, together with his mother's response in L. Davis (ed.) *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance. An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents* (New York & London 1998) pp.133-143

able to proceed further without her aunt's approval. But the impression is gained that this belated action was as much about responding to circumstances than forming a conscientious adherence to protocol. It is also notable that it was Jane's aunt, not her father, to whom he felt the need to appeal.

Perhaps because of Williams' ambiguous role and status, his letter comprises a mix of deference and pride, excuses and assertions. It reads primarily as an attempt to placate Lady Joan, although seems to have had the opposite effect. In the very act of writing, Williams appears to have realised the futility of his efforts. But he remained resolute in making as strong a case as he could. His initial tack was to present the story as something that had been conjured up by gossip. However, it becomes clear that the possibility of his marrying Jane Whalley was real in his own mind, even if he knew it was doomed to failure. He used a range of arguments to win Lady Joan's support: he was the victim of malicious gossip; Jane Whalley had displayed characteristics undesirable in a prospective wife and young woman of her status (and therefore should be married off to him as the least bad option); he was well-respected; he had been offered several other positions but had not accepted them because of his commitment to the Barrington family (rather than to Jane personally); he had at least a modest wealth and collection of possessions; he was regarded by others as an eligible bachelor and was not short of offers of marriage; he had such a deep affection for Jane - and for her family - he would rather not marry her than compromise her - and its - future happiness; and bare-faced flattery.¹²

The letter gives the impression that Williams was a frequent visitor to Lady Joan at Hatfield Broadoak. He therefore expected her to be surprised by his absence. The letter is described as a "paper deputie", suggesting Williams' perception of the written word as an acceptable, but inferior, substitute to his meeting with Lady Joan. Through reference to 1

¹² See R. O'Day 'The Anatomy of a Profession: the Clergy of the Church of England' in W. Prest (ed.) *The Professions in Early Modern England* (London 1987) p.49 for an exploration of the ambiguous relationship in which clergy were placed given their often humble backgrounds, reliance on patronage and alienation from the laity

Samuel 17:29, Williams equated his position to that of David. Thus, he appealed to Lady Joan in the same way as David appealed to eldest brother, Eliab: "'What have I don? May I not even speak?'" This indicates Williams' construction of the letter as a defence and explanation that he had been unable to present hitherto. But the sensitivity of the subject matter and the way in which he framed his arguments and defences suggests he preferred to explain himself from a distance. His alleged disappointment at not being able to present his case in person appears feigned rather than genuinely felt.

It is only in the fifth sentence that the letter's actual subject matter is revealed, with the explanation that Williams, although concerned about its effect on Lady Joan, had paid little attention to the gossip linking him with Jane Whalley. Retreating within the letter behind a florid lament that the rumour had gathered strength like a "rowling snowball or some flowing streame", Williams admitted his actual retreat "behind the hangings" and provided the defence that he could in no way be charged with fuelling or encouraging the gossip. Acknowledging the significance of "so great a business", Williams appeared ready to accept the absurdity of the match and that it could only gain credibility if endorsed by Lady Joan. It seems the gossip had become so virulent that Williams could avoid communicating with her no longer. A contradiction seems to lurk; while Williams claimed to seek Lady Joan's advice as fulfilment of duty, it seems to have been the pressure of the gossip that actually compelled him to do so.

With the cat out of the bag, Williams worked on the theme of his needing advice, alluding to the wisdom of God and Solomon that ideas and thoughts should be developed by counsel. The letter contains a reference to Proverbs 20:18: "Plans are matured by consultation; take advice before waging war". Williams therefore sought advice from Lady Joan, acknowledging she was the prime person from whom he needed sanction to advance his matrimonial plans. That he drew an implicit analogy between his wish to marry Jane Whalley and "waging war", suggests his awareness that such a aim would be far from easy to achieve and, possibly, combative. No doubt he appreciated the coherence achieved by

referring to David, the second king of Israel, in the first paragraph of this letter, and to Solomon, the third king of Israel, in the second (perhaps it was a test of Lady Joan's scriptural knowledge).

The second paragraph begins with Williams conceding that he would be deemed unworthy to be linked with Lady Joan's niece. The term "portion" is used to refer to Jane's good breeding and family, not the financial package that would accompany her when she married, conveying that these elements were of greater importance to Williams, as a clergyman and a man of virtue. From this point, the letter drops any pretence of its dealing with mere gossip and puts forward a case for its author to be considered a serious contender as husband to Jane. Williams reminded Lady Joan that he was held in high regard, not least by herself, and deployed the high-risk strategy of suggesting Jane's reputation was not that of a good woman. Ironically, he used the qualities attributed to her as grounds for strengthening his claim. Without any apparent sense of the precarious position in which such a line put him, given Jane's close blood ties with Lady Joan, the letter presents the very "indecorum" of Jane's entertaining his attention as evidence of her deserving a man such as he.

Jane's alleged qualities are the reverse of those normally cited as the makings of good wife. Instead of being "passionate", "hastie, rash and inconstant", she should have been quiet, sober, rational, reliable and stable. Williams therefore seems to have used a shorthand - one that he knew Lady Joan would readily understand - to describe a young woman who was not likely to be inundated with offers of marriage that were befitting of her family's social status. In short, the passage seems to describe a woman who might commonly have been referred to as a shrew, and certainly not a woman who would be regarded as 'wifely'.¹³

¹³ See R. Brathwait *The English Gentlewoman* (London 1631; Amsterdam 1970) Dedicatory epistle

Williams' attack on Jane's character, while chancy, seems to have been tactical, designed to encourage Lady Joan to sanction the marriage on the grounds it might be the only, or the best, offer her niece would receive. Certainly, it is ironic that Williams should support his case by negative references to the object of his apparent desire and the "neere kinswoman" of the intended recipient of his letter. Significantly, however, Williams couched reference to Jane's dubious character in terms of her reputation. In so doing, he distanced himself from slights on her character, revealing neither one way nor the other whether he subscribed to them. In this sense, his approach seems two-pronged: to avoid causing Lady Joan offence by implicating himself in the negative view of her niece and to play on Lady Joan's likely concern about how members of her family were viewed by others.

Having constructed such a perilous case, Williams declared, "something stick[s]", betraying his awareness he had argued himself into a difficult position. Not only had he contradicted his original line that he was the victim of unwanted and unsubstantiated gossip, he had sought to bolster his case as a worthy match for Lady Joan Barrington's niece by casting aspersions on the young woman's character. He then admitted that, if nothing else was problematical, the chances of his marrying Jane were likely to be dashed by her father's difficult financial position. (Having been defrauded by relatives, Richard Whalley did not have the money that he would otherwise have had to put forward as Jane's portion.)¹⁴ The letter therefore accepts that a marriage between them could "never be ... enjoyed", regardless of other potential obstacles.

Nevertheless, Williams continued his attempts to strengthen his case as prospective marriage partner, excusing his lack of career progression - and therefore lack of wealth - by reference to divine providence and his own "tender conscience", and boasting of offers of more lucrative employment, including a post in New England. However, he was also

¹⁴ Letter from Richard Whalley to Lady Joan Barrington, 22 July 1628. BL Egerton Mss.2644, f.275

keen to avoid giving the impression that he would stray from serving the Barrington family (in fact, he departed for America not long after). Again, discussion of such issues put Williams in a difficult position. By admitting his financial situation was not attractive, he might be seen to be faulting his conditions of service with the Barrington family. He therefore tried to counter any offence by claiming that nothing would draw him away from his current position, and declaring he would always endeavour to fulfil his duties to Lady Joan to the highest standards. He outlined his small amount of money and what he expected to receive on his mother's death (apparently not forthcoming).¹⁵ Seemingly aware of the further irony of a clergyman striving to promote himself on the basis of wealth, he conceded he had more in material terms than he deserved.

Once more, Williams changed tack, presenting himself as a man not short of opportunities to marry, and as having one particularly promising offer (probably the match he subsequently concluded with Mary Barnard in December 1629)¹⁶. However, he made clear he would not pursue other marital possibilities until he had given Lady Joan the opportunity to sanction a match with Jane Whalley. It seems, therefore, that Williams had several strategies for gaining a wife; if he could not have Jane, he had other possibilities to explore. Such a 'multi-pronged' approach to finding a marriage partner was not unusual, as is clear from Richard Young's letter and the multiple negotiations pursued on behalf of other young women within the Barrington family (see chapter six).

Apparently proud of his candour, Williams felt he should gain credit for revealing "the whole anatomie of the busines" to Lady Joan. But he stated he would rather not marry Jane if it would jeopardise her happiness and abuse the "kind affection" of her aunt. In a further example of convoluted reasoning, he contended that the best way he could express his love for Jane and her family would be not to marry her. Aware of his shortcomings as a

¹⁵ LaFantasie *Correspondence of Roger Williams*. p.4

¹⁶ Ibid. p.4

potential husband (despite his previous attempts to elevate them in Lady Joan's eyes), he emphasised his reluctance to risk becoming "like gall to all the hony of my life".¹⁷ Perhaps to guard against Lady Joan misinterpreting Williams' magnanimity as half-heartedness, Williams added, "for the present I know none in the world I more affect". His declaration of affection was therefore qualified with hints of its potential impermanence. He also explained his affection was not as great as that which Jane appeared to have for him, testament to his own greater caution and sensitivity to the difficulties surrounding their relationship. If he were to gain assurance that God countenanced their liaison, he was confident his love for Jane would have "fully answered (if not exceeded) her affection".¹⁸

The final paragraph seems to admit defeat. It conflates scriptural allusions to explain the lesson Williams had learned - "to still my soule as a weaned child and give offence to none". To quote both the references throws light on his mood:

Yahweh, my heart is not haughty, I do not set my sight high, I have taken no part in great affairs, in wonders beyond my scope. No, I hold myself in quiet and silence, like a little child in its mother's arms, like a little child, so I keep myself. [Psalm 131:2]

We avoid putting obstacles in anyone's way, so that no blame may attach to our work of service; but in everything we prove ourselves authentic servants of God; by resolute perseverance in times of hardship, difficulties and distress. [2 Corinthians 6:3-4]

Despite his earlier references to Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 18 ("... take advice before waging war"), Williams seems to have had no real intention of putting up a fight. Rather, he deferred to God and Lady Joan to determine his future, and appears to have accepted this would not involve marrying Jane Whalley. Perhaps in one last attempt to win over Lady Joan, however, he ended his letter with a eulogy. His suggestion that she was like Sarah carries connotations that, despite her advanced years, she was, figuratively still

¹⁷ An apparent reference to the French proverb, "A little gall spoils a great deal of honey"; see *LaFantasie Correspondence of Roger Williams*. p.7

¹⁸ See chapter three for notions of men's superior self-control

fertile, as well as being a matriarchal figure, noblewoman, and obedient wife (albeit a widow).¹⁹

Williams' use of imagery is interesting. The themes of light, representing honesty and openness, and darkness, representing the clandestine, are prevalent throughout: having stood "behind the hangings" to avoid being perceived as the perpetrator of gossip, he hoped the gossip might one day be manifested in legitimate reality if Lady Joan's support allowed it to come "to light". The way in which the rumour had gained momentum is also powerfully evoked: it was "like a rowling snowball" and a "flowing streame"; it had "fluttered" and "flowne"; it "extends" and "gathers"; and it had grown "stronger and stronger". All these descriptors lend weight to Williams' claims of innocence and lack of control of the matter (although not his emotions). Adding to images drawn from nature, the text describes the benign and divinely-ordained power of the Barrington family as "flowrishing branches".

A letter with such contradictory messages could easily have lacked coherence. However, its diverse threads gain a cogency through Williams' heavy use of repetition. To cite just a few collocations shows how cleverly the letter was crafted:

cause ... knowne and open cause ... a known and open cause ... causes ... well
knowne

speeches have long fluttered and flowne abroad ... the report extends stronger
and stronger ... the report as strong abroad

neere kinswoman ... neerenes of her blood

see the light ... come to light

so great a busines ... whole anatomie of the business

¹⁹ See *The International Bible Encyclopaedia* (Michigan 1988) Vol.4 p.335; D.L. Jeffrey (ed.) *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Michigan, 1992) pp.680,681; see chapter four

wombe ... gray haire ... grey haire ... last dayes

going downe in peace ... rising in glory

Jane Whalley is not referred to by name at all. She is described firmly in relation to her aunt, as "your ladship's neere kinswoman" and "your ... worthy niece". Elsewhere, she is referred to simply by the third person pronoun. The letter therefore gives the impression Williams had a strong sense of Lady Joan's proprietorial control over Jane, and suggests a greater concern for roles and relationships than for individuals *per se*. No reference is made to Jane's father or what he might have thought about the match. Even Jane's portion, due to have been drawn from Richard Whalley's estate but endangered by his financial difficulties, is referred to by Williams as a gift from God.

If Williams' genuine intentions were to alleviate Lady Joan Barrington's concerns about unwelcome rumours, present a convincing case as to why he should be considered a serious contender as a husband for Jane Whalley, and absolve himself of any blame, the letter failed. Its appeals for Lady Joan's sympathy, its fluency, its heavy scriptural allusion, and its natural imagery seem merely to have fuelled her anger about a situation she already found wholly unacceptable. It seems that Lady Joan Barrington was angered and upset by the letter, and by a subsequent one he sent her.²⁰ Relations between them were not properly restored until 1630.²¹ Meanwhile, Jane decided subsequently that her behaviour relating to Williams had been inappropriate for someone of her standing and sex. Once married to Richard Hook - whom she rated highly as a husband - Jane wrote to her aunt seeking forgiveness for her former "carelesnes and untowar[d]nes".²²

²⁰ Letter from Roger Williams to Lady Joan Barrington, 2 May 1629. BL Egerton MS 2643, f.3

²¹ Lafantasie *Correspondence of Roger Williams*.p.7

²² Letter from Jane Hook to Lady Joan Barrington. 29 December 1629. BL Egerton Mss.2645, f.112

Madam,

Most of Mrs. L.A.'s discourse is of her self, indeed every one is apt to speack of himself, as being of self-love, which makes most tongues discourse of self-theme; but her theme is, to tell how good a Wife she will make when she is married, although the proof will be after she is married, if she can get a Husband; for I believe she wants one, and desires one, because she talks so much of a Husband, and promises so well for a Husband. Truly it is to be observed that all Maids love to talk of Husbands, all Widows of Suters, and all Wives of Lovers; for men may marry, nay do often marry, yet not for Love, but for Interest, as for Posterity, or the like; and Suters may woo, yet not for Love, but Interest, as for Wealth, or the like; But when Amorous Lovers plead, it is for no other design, but to lie with the Woman they make their address to; and married Wives are not apt to yield than Maids or Widows, having a cloak to cover their shame or reproach, and a husband to father their children; and they are more fond of amorous courtships than Maids or Widows, because they are more barr'd as being bound in Wedlock's-bonds: besides, it requires more secrecy and difficulty, both of which Women love. But when Maids, Widows, and Wives, talk of Husbands, Suters and Lovers, they are so delighted with the Discourse, as you may perceive, not only by their Speech, being then quicker, and their Wit sharper, and Words fluenter, but also by their Looks, their Eyes livelier, their Countenance pleasanter, and their Behaviour gayer or wantoner, than in any other Discourse, especially if it be upon particular persons, such as they fancy, or think fancy them. But as for Mrs. L.A. who discourses so much of a Husband, I do verily believe, she will make a very good Wife, not that she says so, but that she hath been bred strictly and retiredly, and is of a sober, and stay'd Nature, not apt to run into Extravagancies, nor to desire variety of Company, but is Huswifely and Thrifty, and of an humble and obedient Behaviour, and not onely Attentive to good Advices, but Tractable and practice to them; all which makes her deserve a good Husband, and I wish her one with all my heart; but she must make her fortune, whether none or any bad or good; but many a good Batchelor makes an ill Husband, and many a wild deboyst Batchelor makes a good Husband; and as for Widowers, many men that were good Husbands to their first Wives, are ill Husbands to their second, third, or fourth, or to some good, and to some bad; and some that have been ill and unkind Husbands to their first Wives, are very good, and fond Husbands to their second: the like for Maids, Wives

and Widows; so as none can make a wise choice haphazard; for haphazard as chance, bans out Wisdom's prudence, it blindfolds Wisdom, having no insight into Chance; so as a Fool blinded with Ignorance, may choose in the Lottery of Husbands and Wives, as well as the Wisest, being blinded with the inconstancy of Mankind. But leaving Mrs. L.A. to the Lottery, and her Matrimonial Contemplations and Discourses, I rest,

Madam,

Your faithfull Friend and Servant.

The lottery of marriage formation

Margaret Cavendish was a prolific writer who gained notoriety not so much because she was a woman who produced so many works but because she wrote to be published on secular topics (see chapter four). Perhaps with her critics in mind, Cavendish explained that her husband "never bid me to Work, nor leave Writing, except when you would persuade me to spare som such time for my Study as to take the Air for my Health".²⁴ She therefore used her husband's support to justify her actions. Throughout the collection of *Sociable Letters*, Cavendish referred to her quiet domestic life and happy marriage, possibly a deliberate tactic to protect herself against contemporary attack.²⁵

Like Roger Williams, Cavendish had a strong interest in language and the written word, although for different reasons. Only too aware of her lack of formal education, she excused her writing on the basis of her "Sex and Breeding" and stated her wish to "Write so Wisely, Wittily, Eloquently, and Methodically, as might be Worthy of your perusal".²⁶ She apologised for her "Errors [i.e. misplacing of words, lack of 'Perfect Rime'], for I was not Bred in an University, or a Free-School, to learn the Art of Words".²⁷ But these statements perhaps betray a false modesty, for Cavendish had strong views about how language should be used. Within *Sociable Letters*, she sought explicitly to emulate "a Personal Visitation and Conversation", and to avoid imitating "Romantical Letters, which are but Empty words, and Vain Complements".²⁸ In the

²⁴ Cavendish *Sociable Letters*. Preface 'To his Excellency the Lord Marquess of Newcastle'; see K. Parker (ed.) *Dorothy Osborne. Letters to Sir William Temple*. (London 1987) p.79 for Dorothy Osborne's attack on her sanity and misplaced freedom to publish

²⁵ See J. Fitzmaurice 'Fancy and the Family: Self-characterizations of Margaret Cavendish' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly. Studies in English and American Literature* 53 (1990) pp.198-209; C.M. Jadodzinski *Privacy and Print. Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-century England* (Charlottesville 1999) p.94

²⁶ Cavendish *Sociable Letters* Preface to 'Professors of Learning and Art'

²⁷ Ibid. Preface to 'Noble Readers'

²⁸ Ibid. Preface to 'Noble Readers'; see chapter four

preface to *The Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle*, she similarly stated her wish "to write, in a natural plain style, without Latin sentences, moral instructions, political designs, feigned orations, or envious or malicious exclamations".²⁹

Cavendish produced *Sociable Letters* primarily to add variation to her literary outpourings, feeling that her twenty plays were a "Sufficient" contribution to drama. Moreover, she hoped to attract more readers by her letters' brevity. Describing them as "Short Descriptions in Long Letters", she explained,

... the truth is they are rather Scenes than Letters, for I have Endeavoured under the Lover of Letters to Express the Humours of Mankind, and the Actions of Man's Life by the Correspondence of two Ladies, living at some Short Distance from each other ...³⁰

Constructing an intimate friend as her implied reader, gave Cavendish the opportunity to air views on a range of subjects. The first letter of the collection remarks on the benefits of letter-writing for those friends unable to meet face-to-face. It facilitated

Advice, also telling the several Accidents, and several Employments of our home-affairs, and what visits we receive, or entertainments we make, and whom we visit, and how were are intertained, what discourses we have in our gossip-meetings, and what reports we hear of publick affairs ...³¹

Cavendish therefore carefully defined the imaginary context in which the letters were to be read, and thereby tried to control how they were received. Linguistic devices throughout the collection give continuity and sustain the impression that the author was picking up threads of conversations she had had with her friend (presumably during "gossip-meetings"). The scenario of a woman idly sharing her news and views with a

²⁹ C.H. Firth (ed.) *Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. The Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle* (London 1886) p.xli; Gibson, J. 'Significant Space in Manuscript Letters' *The Seventeenth Century* XII (1997) pp.1-9

³⁰ Cavendish *Sociable Letters*. Preface to 'Noble Readers'

³¹ Ibid. Letter I, p.1

friend led the actual reader into thinking she or he was reading private material, thereby giving Cavendish a relatively free rein to express forthright and risqué views.

Letter XIII within Cavendish's *Sociable Letters* is clearly different from Young's and Williams' missives. It uses the genre of the letter as a literary device, although "Mrs. L.A." might have been an actual woman in search of a husband.³² It follows the structure of many of the letters in the collection, using a specific situation and person as a springboard to extemporise on more general themes; in this case, women's fondness for discussing marriage and amorous attachments, men's duplicitous wooing of women, and the impossibility of judging whether someone would make a good spouse. The impression gained is that Cavendish knew what she wrote was controversial. She might have expected her actual readers to know, at least tacitly, that it was true. Equally, she might have expected them to reject her lines of thinking (see below).³³

The letter is wholly secular in tone. Whereas Young and Williams each made several allusions to God's hand in guiding decisions on matters of marriage, Cavendish gave no indication of divine intervention. Rather, individuals were left to fend for themselves "in the Lottery of Husbands and Wives", able to act only "as a Fool blinded with Ignorance". The downside of such freedom was that men and woman had no recourse to informed judgement about potential marriage partners: they had neither evidence of God's sanction to guide them, nor any apparent sign of guidance from parents or other significant family members to help determine whom they married. Further, it was useless to try to apply wisdom or rationality, since appearances could be deceptive. Thus, men and women were destined to act as fools in an uncertain world. The possible results of the marriage lottery were noted by Sir Richard Hutton, a high-ranking lawyer, in 1625. In his curious

³² See J. Fitzmaurice (ed.) *Margaret Cavendish 'Sociable Letters'*. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities Vol.2009 (New York 1997) p.xii

³³ See M. Montgomery, A. Durant et al. *Ways of Reading. Advanced Reading Skills for Students of English Literature* (London 1992) pp.223-27

mix of English and French, he reported that Mr. Justice Chamberlain, "un homme d'bon disposition" had made an "unfortunate ... mariage del Lady Barkly par quel il pay 5000li".³⁴

Although Cavendish made risque statements about the behaviour of the sexes, she expounded highly conventional views on the qualities that made a good wife. Mrs. L.A. was deserving of a good husband because she possessed the necessary natural attributes and signs of a good upbringing. In short, she was sober, thrifty, obedient, willing to be guided and, above all, "Huswifely", thereby conforming to the model portrayed in the marital conduct books (see chapter eight). By inference, if she had been outspoken, extravagant, gregarious and free-thinking (like Jane Whalley, perhaps, or even Margaret Cavendish herself), she would not have been an ideal, or deserving, candidate for marriage.

The language used in the letter is simple but powerful. Husbands are categorised simply as "good", "bad", "ill", or "unkind". Young men who might turn out to make good husbands could be "wild deboyst Batchelor[s]". 'Deboyst', a derivation of 'deboise' and 'debauch', has similarities with 'roister', used in Young's letter. Just as there seems to have been a dominant language for describing how women should and should not, there seems to have been a parallel, although different, language to describe men (see chapter three). The letter is also highly rhetorical. Most obviously, Cavendish deployed declaratory phrases to give weight and emphasis to her writing: "Truly it is to be observed" and "I do verily believe", for example. She also made sweeping generalisations: "All Maids love to talk of Husbands, all Widows of Suters, and all Wives of Lovers", and referred rather melodramatically to "the Lottery of Husbands and Wives".³⁵ The letter gains a strong coherence by repetition. In particular, "Maids,

³⁴ W.R. Prest (ed.) *The Diary of Sir Richard Hutton 1614-1639 with Related Texts*. Selden Society Supplementary Series Vol.9 (London 1991) p.60

³⁵ See chapter nine for reference to similar statements

Widows, and Wives" and "Husbands, Suters and Lovers" are repeated with various permutations, giving the letter a closely-woven quality and rhythm.³⁶ The following are taken from just the opening lines:

discourse is of her self" / "speak of himself" / "most tongues discourse of a self-theme

self-love /self-theme

when she is married /after she is married

if she can get a Husband /she talks so much of a Husband / promises so well for a
Husband

may marry / do marry

There is also a heavy repetition of individual words: "discourse" appears as a noun four times and as a verb once; "Husband(s)" is repeated thirteen times; "Wives" seven times; and "married" four. The highly alliterative "barr'd as being bound in Wedlock's-bonds" gives weight to Cavendish's notion of married women's entrapment.

Sweeping statements are made about universal female interests and behaviour: amorous liaisons were both women's favourite topic of conversation and endeavour, regardless of their marital status (see chapter ten).³⁷ It can be assumed that Cavendish did not intend these to be read as applying either to herself or her implied reader. Rather, they are implicitly presented as spectators. That Cavendish did not include herself is substantiated by her depictions of her own courtship and marriage in other writings.³⁸

³⁶ Montgomery *et al.* *Ways of Reading*. pp.103-112

³⁷ See M. de Montaigne 'Sur des Vers de Virgil'. trans. C.V. Norman (Florence 1930) pp.29-30; Thomas Salter 'A Mirrhor Mete for all Mothers, Matrones and Maidens, Intituled the Mirrhor of Modestie' (1579) transcribed in S. Twill, K. Chedgzoy & M. Osborne (eds.) *Lay by Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen. Women Writing in England, 1500-1700* (London 1997) p.47

³⁸ See R.W. Goulding (ed.) *Letters from the Originals at Welbeck Abbey* (London 1909) for letters from Margaret Lucas to William Cavendish during their courtship, pp.7,11,13,14; Fitzmaurice *Margaret Cavendish 'Sociable Letters'* p.xiii

We are not, therefore, supposed to include Cavendish or her friend in the statement, "all Wives [love to talk] of Lovers", and are perhaps supposed to notice that the letter is remarkably free of the "self-love" and "self-theme" that it purports pervades conversation. The first person is used only to express an opinion and good wishes regarding Mrs. L.A.; no reference is made to Cavendish's own life-style or preferred topics of conversation.

Despite her forthright views on the rights of women and gender inequities, the letter betrays a strong conditioning by a male-dominated society. The opening phrase - "Most of Mrs. L.A.'s discourse is of her self, indeed very one is apt to speak of himself" - indicates that from transposing from the specific to the general Cavendish felt the need to switch from the feminine to the masculine. Similarly, she claimed *Sociable Letters* were a "cover ... to Express the Humors of mankind, and the Actions of Man's Life by the correspondence of two Ladies".³⁹ Although such a transition is to be expected, the shift from gender-specific to 'male generic' is jarring.

The letter places women in a role of triple passivity: they are alleged to love to talk about their desire for a husband, suitor or lover; they wait for men to come along to assume one of these roles; and they are then duped by them. Men, in contrast, 'do': they pursue, woo and marry women. Moreover, the letter reflects not on how women are affected by the attentions of a suitor or lover, but on how they are affected by gossiping about this happening: women "love to talk" of amorous liaisons, and are "Delighted with the Discourse". The text is not concerned with women displaying the apparent signs of lovesickness, but with the increased vitality the prospect of romance added to women's conversation and demeanour.

The letter contains an underlying contradiction. Mrs. L.A. is presented as a woman who would make a good wife because she displayed all the potential of becoming

³⁹ Cavendish *Sociable Letters* Preface to 'Noble Readers'

one. Yet the letter also counsels on the impossibility of judging the suitability of individuals as spouses from their character or track record. Thus, "a good Batchelor" might make "an ill Husband", whereas "many a wild deboyst Batchelor makes a good Husband". Similarly, it was impossible to gauge whether a widower, a good husband to his late wife, would be as good to a subsequent spouse. The letter does not seem to suggest that the dynamics of marital relationships depended on the precise qualities of the individuals concerned. Rather, the very "Inconstancy of mankind" made choosing a spouse an uncertain business.⁴⁰

The letter ends in a negative and flippant manner. Wisdom, prudence and insight could not ensure a good marriage. Ignorant fools were just as likely to match successfully. Mrs. L.A. is therefore left to her fate. It can be assumed that Cavendish was being deliberately provocative. Possibly she did not expect her readers to accept the premise that it was impossible to judge character. The intended reading of the letter was perhaps one of resistance, thereby serving to endorse the entrenched ideology that breeding and upbringing were of crucial importance and their effects clearly evident.⁴¹

Women are presented as gullible and taking too great a delight in the abstract notion of securing a husband, suitor or lover to be conscious of men's real motives. Men are depicted as using tactics of amorous advances and wooing to disguise their strivings for social or financial expediency or the fulfilment of their lustful longings. Moreover, women who have been fooled by a man before (that is, who are married) are portrayed as being more likely to be receptive to the advances of another than their single sisters; being "bound in Wedlock's-bonds", they have a greater need for excitement and the wherewithal to cover themselves should they fall pregnant. They also have a greater need to keep the relationship secret, fitting with women's delectation for "secrecy and

⁴⁰ See Henry Smith *A Preparative for Mariage* (London 1591; Amsterdam 1975) pp.30-1 for a stress on the importance of ensuring compatibility, in addition to virtue, in marriage partners

⁴¹ See Montgomery *et. al. Ways of Reading*. pp.227-29

difficulty". Such comments simply bolster contemporary notions that women were untrustworthy and that husbands should not be complacent about their wives' fidelity or 'their' children really being their own.

The letter is essentially cynical in tone. Little assurance is offered about the nature of relationships between men and women, or the benefits of taking a rational approach to finding a marriage partner. Women are not portrayed as being in love with the men from whom they accept advances, but of being in love with the notion of love and clandestine relationships. Similarly, men do not love the women they woo, but simply use amorous behaviour to disguise their real intent. The letter therefore reads as a "Short Description(s)" of the sad nature of relations between the sexes. It offers no solutions. Implicit within, is the idea that women might fare better if they woke up to men's deceptive behaviour and stopped being so enamoured with the abstract notion of love. While it is not clear whether this message was necessarily intended, its sense of moral justice is evident: women who conformed to the wifely ideal were deserving of a good husband. Whether they actually gained one, however, was a lottery.

The three letters compared

The three letters were written within a timespan of almost a hundred years, in different circumstances and for different purposes. Nonetheless, there are significant similarities in the attitudes they betray about appropriate female behaviour; the impact of breeding and upbringing on individuals' potential as marriage partners; the process of marriage formation; and oral and written communication. That only one of the proposed matches ended in marriage does not diminish the value of the correspondence. It is the views and cultural expectations the letters rehearse that are significant.

The qualities that women should possess to be worthy of being married off to good husbands (use of the passive is deliberate) were articulated explicitly by Cavendish, touched on by Young, and implied by Williams. Each indicated that sobriety, constancy and quietness were the required attributes of a wifely woman. It seems unlikely that Williams was attracted to Jane Whalley because of her alleged passion, hastiness, rashness and inconstancy. Rather, he seems perversely to have referred to these traits because they undermined her ability to claim a man seen as more eligible than himself. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Cavendish, feted by some as a proto-feminist, ascribed to the notion that submissive women deserved the best husbands.⁴²

Young gives the impression that Joan Hayward had been well-schooled in how to respond to offers of marriage. Although wise enough to be cautious about whether she could develop a fondness for a man she had never met - and careful to point to the possibility that a prospective husband might equally find her unattractive - she had learned the need to flatter his parents. Moreover, her alleged statements indicate the expectation that a father's virtue would be passed onto his son and the belief that good

⁴² See H. Smith *Reason's Disciples. Seventeenth-Century English Feminists*. (Urbana 1982) p.87

parents made good children, echoing a more pervasive confidence in good breeding (see chapter five). Williams reached rather an impasse on this issue. Having stressed Jane Whalley's lofty status as a "neere kinswoman" of Lady Joan Barrington, it was dangerous to allude to the young woman's dubious reputation. Equally, there is a contradiction in Cavendish's exposition on marriage formation. While she appears to have believed that Mrs. L.A. deserved a good husband because she showed all the outward signs of a good upbringing, the letter contains the counter-argument (seemingly unwittingly) about the impossibility of judging who would make good marriage material. Each of the letters stresses the importance of good parentage and a sound upbringing as the basis for marriage, but does not resolve the tensions presented if an individual failed to live up to his or her promise.

A pragmatic approach to marriage formation emerges through the letters. None gives the impression that a particular match had to be secured, to fulfil either amorous ambitions or the wider interests of the families concerned. Young's letter suggests the Thynne and Hayward families' primary interest was to preserve their good relations, regardless of whether they made a match between John and Joan. John appears to have been just one more young man investigated by the Hayward family, while we know that the Thynne family's negotiations regarding Joan formed at least a second attempt at finding a wife for John. Joan herself does not seem to have assumed that John would necessarily be the last prospective husband about whom she would receive reports; hence, her cautious and conditional expression of interest in the young man. Williams gave a similar impression: Jane Whalley was his preferred marriage prospect at the time of writing, but he was keen Lady Joan should know he had other options. Moreover, he did not rule out the possibility of developing greater affection for another woman in the future, should his immediate marital aspirations be dashed.

Despite this pragmatism, the existence or potential for affection was a key criterion for the letter-writers in choosing or accepting a proposed marriage partner.

Joan Hayward had apparently declared that she had greater "affiance" for John Thynne than for any other men so far suggested to her, while Williams declared of Jane Whalley, "I know none in the world I more affect". However, there seems to have been a shared belief that such affection was temporary and could be transferred if the marriage in question was not secured. Joan had "never heard of none yet" she liked better, while Williams was only prepared to admit his liking Jane Whalley best "for the present". Lacking in each letter is a romanticised or tragic notion that frustrated love would lead to lifelong misery or premature death.

Given the letters' common theme, it is not surprising they show strong linguistic parallels. But there are perceptible shifts in style, words and phrasing, no doubt partly attributable to changes in language in the period in which they were written. Cavendish's letter has a greater feeling of modernity, with "married" and "marry" used in contrast to Young's "match" and Williams' indirect references to his marital aspirations ("cause", "proposition" and "so great a business"). Cavendish also referred repeatedly to husbands and wives, terms that do not appear at all in the two earlier letters. Cavendish's text refers to "love", "amorous courtships" and people having a "fancy" for one another. Young's letter, in contrast, refers to disposing and uniting "hearts" and "minds", the hope John Thynne and Joan Hayward would develop a "liking" for another, and Joan's sense of "affiance" towards John. Representing a linguistic middleground, Williams referred to Jane Whalley's "loving and strong affection" for him and his own "affect" for her.

It would be hasty to conclude that the three writers' use of language and turn of expression were simply the result of linguistic evolution. Similarly, it would be unwise to conclude that differences between the language used by Young and Williams, on the one hand, and Cavendish, on the other, were simply due to their sex. The letters were written for different purposes and audiences. Despite this, a comparison of them is valid. Together, the three letters offer insights into attitudes and expectations regarding

marriage formation and marriage itself, illustrating the complex nature of negotiations and the inter-relationship between rhetoric and emotion.

Key inferences

Mindful of the dangers inherent in drawing inferences from a limited range of sources, it remains that interesting facets of marriage formation and family life emerge through the letters considered in the two chapters. These largely affirm the trends observed through an examination of a broader range of materials and source types. They reinforce the complexity of the business of forging marriages for the gentry and nobility, in terms of the parties involved, the factors weighed up in decision-making and accorded priority, attitudes towards love and its standing in relation to more pragmatic considerations, and the protracted nature of many negotiations to secure a match.

Perhaps most striking, the letters alert us to the range of approaches that could be taken to brokering marriages within the upper ranks of early-modern England, ranging from adherence to the protocols of an arranged marriage pursued by the Thynne and Hayward families to the independently-made love match of Herbert Aston and Katherine Thimelby. Commonalities in motives emerge, however. Not least are a keenness on the part of all to maintain sound relations across families whether or not negotiations were resolved successfully and to ensure all parties were happy with a match within a basic framework of family sanction. Also strongly evident is the expectation that love should underpin marriage, either by forming a precursor to a match occurring or its forming a necessary prospective development. It is these issues that the next section explores through a broader range of source material.

Contemporary didactic treatises offer an intriguing perspective on gender and family relationships, albeit one requiring careful treatment and contextualisation.¹ The sheer volume of published advice literature forces an examination of the mores it presented (and, quite possibly, misrepresented) and the manner of their presentation. There was a high degree of resonance between published prescription and private advice within families. But the conduct books, while advocating a 'benign inequality' between married couples, did not reflect the balance of power that existed within many marriages.² Neither did they reflect the full fluidity exercised in forging marriages.

Although an elusive subject, insights can be gained into early-modern attitudes and experiences of love in marriage formation and marriage itself. Tensions appear at a superficial level: in a period that witnessed an upsurge in love as the subject of published literature and dramatic works, the social groups that mainly read this material have been assumed to have controlled marriage in ways that were largely antithetical to the emotion.³ Did artistic literature provide an escape from its readers' and audiences' experience, or did it complement or reflect individuals' lives? Were literary explorations and individuals' actual experiences of love as different as they might first appear? A second potential tension can be detected within prescriptive literature and personal advice. On the one hand, love threatened families' posterity and the wider community's stability; on the other, it was a necessary agent for cementing lasting and godly relationships and maintaining family security and a well-ordered society.⁴ Experiences, attitudes towards, and

¹ See P. Collinson *The Birth-pangs of English Protestantism. Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London 1989) pp.92-93; J.A. Sharpe *Early Modern England. A Social History 1550-1760*. 2nd edn (London 1997) p.57

² See A Wall 'Elizabethan Precepts and Feminine Practice: The Thynne Family of Longleat' *History* 75 (1990) 37-8

³ R. Ballaster *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford 1992) p.35; R.A. Houlbrooke *The English Family 1450-1700* (Harlow 1984) p.77; S.W. Hull *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino 1982) pp.74-75; A. Sinfield *Literature in Protestant England 1560-1660* (London 1983) p.70

⁴ M.B. Rose *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca 1988)

perceptions of love, in early-modern England therefore seem ambiguous. But a more detailed consideration of available sources shows a confluence and resolution in strands of thinking.

Surviving documents can reveal attitudes towards love, how individuals expressed their love for one another, and how they chose or were conditioned to recount their feelings and experiences of love, although they cannot give a full impression of the emotional experiences themselves and we cannot be confident that the limited number of individuals into whose thoughts and beliefs we can gain insight are necessarily representative (see chapter one).⁵ At the same time, letters played an active role in courtship and sustaining relationships. Moreover, individuals were acutely conscious of the emotional power of language. A strong impression emerges of a sophisticated understanding of the nature of love, with careful distinctions made between that which was deemed licit and illicit and the proper role of love within marriage.

The following three chapters return to issues raised in the previous seven. While it might seem odd to address prescriptive literature towards the end of the study, a more considered look at the rhetoric of marriage formation and marriage and examining attitudes and recorded experiences of love gives deeper insights into family structures, gender roles, family decision-making and the dynamic relationship between different types of sources. It therefore seems a fitting way to draw the threads of the thesis together.

pp.4,13

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A. Goreau 'The English Woman in the Seventeenth Century: Notes for an Anatomy of Feminine Desire' in Aries & Bejin (eds.) *Western Sexuality. Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times* trans. J. Dunnett (Oxford 1994) p.106; see L. Lerner *Love and Marriage. Literature and its Social Context* (London 1979) p.xi for a criticism of Lawrence Stone's inference of sentiment from recorded feelings in *The Family, Sex and Marriage*

Chapter eight

Prescribed marriage formation and marital relationships

Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century authors were keen to advise on how marriages should be forged and conducted and how households should be organised. The counsel of the puritan conduct books, which largely formed transcriptions or re-workings of sermons, was supported heavily by scriptural reference and allusion, in part perhaps reflecting a keenness to demonstrate their erudition.¹ The works also betrayed an essentially secular and pragmatic belief in the family as the cornerstone of a stable, well-ordered society (see chapter two). A close intertwining of religious and secular strands of thinking emerges, with each informing, substantiating and legitimising one other.²

The chapter considers advice on marriage formation and gender roles offered within commercially-oriented treatises, counsel offered through published epistolary literature, and tips offered within individual families, in addition to the marital conduct books. Common threads are evident. But there were also differences of emphasis, reflecting the particular purposes for which literature was produced.

Counsel on marriage formation

The puritan marital conduct books criticised sharply and emotively the convention of the arranged marriage, especially when its practice involved securing a match before one, or both partners, was of age. William Whately appealed to parents, "destroy not your children, by matching them to miserable riches".³ For William Gouge, matches arranged during childhood were "mock-marriages, and meere nullities" that could only become

¹ See L. Davis (ed.) *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance. An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents*. (New York & London 1998) p.166

² R. O'Day *The Family and Family Relationships in England, France & the United States of America, 1500-1900* (London 1994) p.44

³ William Whately *A Care-cloth: Or a Treatise of the Cumbers and Troubles of Marriage* (London 1624) p.73

binding when ratified by the couples "after they come to yeares".⁴ John Dod and Robert Cleaver counselled parents "neither [to] call their children to this contract, neither command them, neither require them, neither exhorte them".⁵ Nevertheless, parents had the authority both not to consent to a marriage pressed for by their children and to confer the ultimate sanction for a marriage contract (see chapters six and seven). The implicit consensus of the writers was that, while a prospective couple had to agree to wedlock, their marriage should be subject to parental consent. Dod and Cleaver added the caveat that this could form approval from other family members, magistrates and masters, suggesting their appreciation that channels of familial authority were often affected by death, remarriage and step-relations (see chapter two).⁶ They might also have been of the view (as families often were in practice) that it was valuable to involve members of the extended family in the significant process of decision-making relating to who married whom (see chapter six).

The conduct books advocated a fine balance between parental control and children's freedom to marry someone with whom they felt compatible and, at least the potential for, mutual affection. (This reflected both canon law of 1604, which forbade marriage without parental consent for those under twenty-one and required consent for all other than remarriages, and the reality that marriages that flouted the law were not declared invalid.⁷) Parental consent was "not only meet, but necessarie"; it enabled

⁴ William Gouge *Of Domesticall Duties* (London 1622; Amsterdam 1976) p.181; for statements on the law concerning child marriages, see F.J. Furnivall, *Child-Marriages, Divorces and Ratifications, sic in the Diocese of Chester, 1561-6* (London 1897) pp.xxxv,xxxvi; see J.O. Haliwell (ed.) *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee, and the Catalogue of his Library Manuscripts, from the original manuscripts* Camden Society Vol.19 (London 1842) p.14 for Dee's report of his son, Arthur, and Mary Herbert calling "each other husband and wife" when "but three yere old the eldest"; see L. Stone *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford 1966) pp.653 for a stress on the relative rarity of child marriages

⁵ John Dod & Robert Cleaver *A Godlie Forme of Household Government: For the Ordering of Private Families, According to the Direction of Gods Word* (London 1612) pp.132

⁶ Ibid. pp.133-34

⁷ See I. Bell *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge 1998) p.205; M. Ingram 'Espousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c.1350-1640' in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London 1981) p.47; R.B. Outhwaite *Clandestine Marriage in England, 1500-1850* (London 1995) pp.9,10

children to achieve independence. In this sense, children were seen as their parents' goods, "wholly in their power and disposed by them" and no different from servants, "even the eldest that are heires".⁸ Parents' power to confer, or withhold, consent was believed to be divinely ordained. If a couple married without securing parental approval, the partners could not "be said to bee ioyned by God mediately".⁹ By following parental guidance (or its appropriate substitute), children could also secure greater experience and wisdom on a matter that was critical to their future happiness.¹⁰ It was important, moreover, that individuals did not alienate their parents if they were to retain access to a safe haven in times of need.¹¹ That such advice reflected standard practice and the realities of life is evident from individual families (see chapter two). At the same time, individuals should not let themselves be influenced unduly or inappropriately in their choice of marriage partner, given the inherently subjective nature of the matter.¹² There was thus a clear balance to strike.

The parental prerogative of control carried obligations. While the conduct book writers argued in favour of parents overseeing whom their children married, they warned against matchmaking based on financial, social or political gain and parents forcing their offspring into intolerable marriages. Ensuring that children married well - and for the right reasons - was not simply in the power of parents, it was their duty. Once their (male) offspring reached a "ripe age", parents should "counsel them" and "govern them unto a fit and religious wife". Not to do so led children to make "matches only for carnal respects" and "to live wantonly and uncleanly". Moreover, children best demonstrated the obedience they owed their parents by "being governed by them in the matter of calling and marriage."¹³ While parents were responsible for matching their children wisely and setting

⁸ Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. p.442

⁹ Whately *Care-Cloth*. p.33

¹⁰ Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. p.449

¹¹ Whately *Care-Cloth*. pp.70-71

¹² See Richard Brathwait *The English Gentleman* (London 1630; Amsterdam 1975) p.262

¹³ Dudley Fenner 'The Order of Household: Described Methodically out of the Word of God, with the Contrary Abuses Found in the World' (1592) transcribed in Davis *Sexuality and Gender*. pp.178-80

aside money for suitable portions and jointures, children were responsible for accepting parental guidance. Gouge criticised parents who sought "outward advantage" by making their children marry prematurely.¹⁴ Dod and Cleaver believed that marriages achieved "by threatening loss of preferment" were simply invalid.¹⁵ "Parents cannot command affections", Thomas Gataker warned; "The very offer of enforcement turneth [love] into hatred".¹⁶

Samuel Hieron was the most outspoken against parents who focused on the financial attributes of a prospective match to the exclusion of other factors. The proper measurement of a good wife was whether she had an "inward goodness". Even he conceded, however, that it was legitimate - and, indeed, incumbent on parents - to give some consideration to "outward things". Crucially, parents should aim to seek equality in "yeares", "estate" and "meanes" to ensure "an even yoke-fellow" for a partner.¹⁷ Predictably, other writers were more cynical. Sir Francis Osborne warned his son of the dangers of marrying a woman without money; marriage was best suffered if it brought a large estate (thereby going against the adage too rich a wife could bring trouble highlighted in chapter two).¹⁸

Parental direction, moderated by a consideration of children's interests and respect for children's right at least to veto a match presented to them, was central to the conduct book writers' advice. But other writers were freer in their counsel. In a letter purportedly of 1625, James Howell did not question that his cousin, simply addressed as 'T.W.', could find a suitable wife without his parents' help. He warned William Saintgeon in 1634 against taking action in blatant conflict with the wishes of the young man's father on the

¹⁴ Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. pp.563-66

¹⁵ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Government*. pp.120,121

¹⁶ Thomas Gataker *A Good Wife Gods Gift. A Marriage Sermon on Proverbs 19.14*. (London 1620) pp.10-11

¹⁷ Samuel Hieron *The Bridegroome* (London 1613) pp.8,10,11

¹⁸ Francis Osborne 'Advice to a Son, or Directions for your Better Conduct through the Various and Most Important Encounters in this Life' (Oxford 1656) in L.B. Wright (ed.) *Advice to a Son* (Ithaca 1962) pp.61-63,68

grounds, "nothing conduceth more to the Happiness or Infelicity of the Child" than maintaining or losing a father's blessing.¹⁹ Howell seems therefore to have thought it acceptable for young gentlemen to act independently providing they did so within the parameters of parental approval.²⁰ A young man could thus be trusted with limited freedom if he balanced self-interest with his family's interests. Samuel Hieron's sermon *The Bridegroome* (1613) centred around two precepts: "How to chuse his love" and "How to love his choice". This made clear the expectation that young men should exercise some freedom in such a critical decision.²¹ Richard Brathwait advised young gentlemen not to let their own judgement be usurped, "as you are to have the greatest Oare in the Boat" in marriage, while both Sir John Oglander and Sir John Strode advised their sons on choosing a wife.²² The latter wrote,

At thine age of 22, my son, be advised by thy wisest friends and take a wife of the same religion and faith which thou professeth. ... Let thy wife be thy younger in years, thine equal in birth, no common dancer, nor gadder nor gamester. Not too fair, of convenient comelinesse, her portion at least answerable to her charge, apt to govern her household and obey her husband.²³

Young women, in contrast, could not be trusted to find their own husbands. As Lady Anne Southwell reflected, "maydens ... are bounde unto theyre fathers will"; they should therefore "praye that god will gyve theyre father care and skill to choose for them a wise and sober made".²⁴ Sir John Oglander offered his son the maxim (notably he did not write directly to his daughters), "Marry thy daughters in time lest they marry

¹⁹ James Howell *Epistolae Ho-Elinae: Familiar Letters Domestic and Foreign* 11th edn (London 1754) pp.177,262

²⁰ See also 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his son' (1602) in J.P. Cooper *Wentworth Papers 1597-1628*. Camden Fourth Series, Vol.12 (London 1973) p.21; Dorothy Leigh *The Mothers Blessing: Or, The Godly Counsaile of a Gentle-woman, Not Long Since Deceased, Left Behind Her for Her Children* 7th edn (London 1621) p.54

²¹ Hieron *Bridegroome*. p.8ff.

²² Brathwait *English Gentleman*. p.263; Sir John Oglander 'Rules for a Happy Life' (1612) and Sir John Strode 'Advice to his son', both printed in C. Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell Symphony* (London 1945) pp.48,52

²³ Sir John Strode 'Advice to son' (1632) reprinted in Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell Symphony* p.52

²⁴ J. Klene (ed.) *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*. Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies (Arizona 1997) pp.83-84; see also George Savile, Marquis of Halifax *The Lady's New-Years Gift: Or, Advice to a Daughter* (London 1688) pp.25,26-27

themselves".²⁵ While he saw it as sufficient to offer his son criteria for choosing a wife, clearly he believed daughters should have their marriage arranged for them. Such advice was perhaps based on personal experience, given Sir John's disappointment that his daughter Bridget had married against his will. At the same time, his approach seems to have been based on a double standard, given that he championed his father's flouting of parental approval (see chapter ten).²⁶

This distinction no doubt related heavily to ideas about feminine irrationality and established views on the need for, and legitimacy of, male control over female action. It perhaps also reflected a concern not to compromise an important part of male identity - the sexual conquering of women. A family's determining whom a young man married could be seen to undermine this. The ideal of married couples living independently carried implicit sexual connotations; that is, that a husband's authority over his wife should not be undermined by contenders for, or detractors from, his power (see chapters two and three). At the same time, the notion that courtship subverted the sex hierarchy - by making men subject to the woman whom they were wooing - also had currency (see chapter ten). The very processes of forging and setting up marriages therefore impacted on gender roles.

Not surprisingly, the conduct books betray an unmistakably male standpoint, often neglecting to address issues from a female perspective.²⁷ In specifying how parents could prepare their children for marriage, Thomas Gataker explained only how girls should be raised to make them suitable wives (that is, acceptable deputies to their future husbands), not how boys could be made suitable husbands.²⁸ (This is not to say,

²⁵ Oglander 'Rules for a Happy Life' p.48

²⁶ Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell-Symphony*. p.113 ; F. Bamford (ed.) *A Royalist's Notebook: The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander Kt. of Nunwell* (London 1936) pp.171-72

²⁷ However, see Robert Snawsel *A Looking Glasse for Married Folkes* (London 1631; Amsterdam 1975) 'Preface to the gentle Reader' for his stress on trying to achieve a balance lest men should think the work irrelevant to them.

²⁸ Thomas Gataker *A Mariage Praier, or Succinct Meditations: Delivered in a Sermon on the Praier*

however, that young gentlemen were not subject to detailed advice on their conduct in other genres; see chapter five.) Likewise, several authors offered men criteria for judging potential wives, but omitted to tell women how they could identify a seemly husband. This skewing is likely to reflect varying degrees of freedom conferred on young men and women to find a marriage partner, but went against the writers' emphasis on the importance of both partners' consent. It highlights the essentially passive role women were expected to play in courtship conventions; they should have the power of refusal, but only to decline a match presented to them (see chapter six).²⁹ Even women who offered advice did so from a male viewpoint; Dorothy Leigh warned against wealth forming the determining factor in choosing a wife and young men falling victim to misguided advice.³⁰ This imbalance is reinforced by the fastidious attention that authors paid to balancing the duties, responsibilities and obligations of husbands and wives and parents and children.³¹

Some writers considered how familial consent and individual discretion could be juggled. Gouge was sceptical of the young's ability to enter wedlock on the basis of anything save lust, seeing youths as generally "heady and rash for want of experience" with little regard for finding "a good lasting helpe for themselves". Parents' greater experience and wisdom meant they were better placed to advise on sensible matches. But their counsel and direction should be tempered by love.³² At the least, they should ensure a liking could develop between a proposed couple, and should not promote partners children simply could not "affect and love". In turn, children should try "to bring their

of *Eleazer the Servant of Abraham, Genesis 24.12,13,14* (London 1624) p.p.19,21; see also Gataker *Good Wife Gods Gift*. p.18

²⁹ See, for example, Henry Smith *A Preparative to Mariage* (London 1591; Amsterdam 1976) p.27; Matthew Griffith *Bethel: Or, A Forme for Families. In which all Sorts, of Both Sexes, are so Squared, and Framed by the Word of God, as they may Best Serve in their Severall Places, for Usefull Pieces in God's Building* (London 1633) point 21 of 'A platforme of the whole building'

³⁰ Leigh *Mothers Blessing*. pp.52,53

³¹ See Fenner 'The Order of the Household'. pp.165-82

³² Gouge *Domesticall Duties* p.449

affection to the bent of their parents['] will".³³ Gataker suggested God could be deployed as an agent to "incline" a child to affection for a prospective spouse.³⁴ However, too zealous a promotion of a match could backfire. Should young men or women prove irreconcilable to a proposed marriage they were under severe pressure to enter, they should seek help from friends and, ultimately, from the local magistrate.³⁵

Advice on marriage formation therefore formed a complex code of checks and balances. Adherence to the code should ensure individuals showed due consideration to their responsibilities and obligations and weighed up the relative priority of factors. Marriage formation was not a matter in which parents could coldly impose their will on their offspring. But neither was it acceptable for prospective marriage partners to disregard their families. Rather, there was a need for mutual respect and acknowledgement of the significance of marriage from all perspectives. The personal risks of not heeding this advice were stressed, as considered below.

Marriage

Although promoting marriage as a laudable and honourable state, the conduct book writers warned it could bring disaster. Again, tending to take a male perspective, Dod and Cleaver claimed it was better "to be a slave to some honest man, then a husband to an unsuitable wife". Gataker likened a husband's living with "an evill wife" to "the raine dropping in through the tiles that maketh him weary of the house, that vexeth him so that it driveth him out of dores". Seemingly only as an after thought did he acknowledge that a wife's experience of living with "an evill husband" could be just as bad.³⁶ Whately warned against rushing too hastily into marriage, providing "a Map before your eyes, or as an imperfect narration, of a dangerous and troublesome voyage". His more specific examples

³³ Ibid. pp.449,564

³⁴ Gataker *Marriage Praier*. p.8; Gataker *Good Wife Gods Gift*. p.11

³⁵ Gouge *Domesticall Duties* pp.449,450,564; see chapter seven for the Thynne and Hayward families' apparent flexibility on this matter.

³⁶ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. pp.166-167; Gataker *Good Wife Gods Gift*. p.6

were from the male viewpoint: a man contemplating marriage should reflect on whether he could tolerate the disorder created by a wife and children and whether he could "arme himselfe with patience against the troubles of that kind of life". Only in a few marriages did the institution's benefits outweigh its disadvantages.³⁷ In contrast, Edward Waterhouse suggested that marriage formed a refuge from the troubles of youth (see chapter five), William Vaughan thought married men had an easier time than bachelors, and William Harrison vouched for the particular benefits marriage brought the clergy.³⁸ For Philip Stubbes, marriage was simply "Honourable amongst all men".³⁹

Smith defined a wife as "The contrarie to a Husband". Conceding such a description was not in scripture, he thought it "no slaunder to many women" and claimed women were of "such a bitter humour, that one would thinke they were molten out of a salt pillar into which Loths wife was transformed". While not all women were alike, Smith concluded "this sect" of bitter women "hath manie Disciples".⁴⁰ There was some acknowledgement that not all men were paragons of virtue. Dudley Fenner listed failings in husbands, including their being "indiscreet, childish" and having the qualities of "hardness, bitterness, [and] want of wisdom".⁴¹ Griffith thought it common for husbands to fail to provide adequately for their wives, leading many women to curse their wedding day. But wives should try to improve their husbands by amiable and loving dotage, not by reproof.⁴² Similarly, they should try to woo back an adulterous husband by demonstrating

37 Whately *Care-cloth* pp.60 [p.68], 9, Preface [p.8], 82-83

38 Edward Waterhouse *The Gentleman's Monitor: Or, a Sober Inspection into the Vertues, Vices, and Ordinary Means of the Rise and Decay of Men and Families* (London 1665) pp.80,81,83; William Vaughan *The Golden-grove, Moralized in Three Bookes: A Worke Very Necessary for All Such, as Would Know how to Governe Themselves, Their Houses, or Their Countrey* 2nd edn (London 1608) 2nd Bk. Ch.4; G. Edelen (ed.) *William Harrison 'The Description of England'* (New York 1968) p.37; see also Alexander Niccholes *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (London 1615) in *Harleian Miscellany* Vol.II (London 1809) p.160

39 P. Stubbes *The Anatomies of Abuses* (London 1583) p.49

40 Smith *Preparative to Mariage* pp.27,82

41 Fenner 'The Order of Household'. p.176; see also Klene *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*. p.20 for the verse "All married men desire to have good wives: but few give good example"

42 Griffith *Bethel*. pp.393,294-95; see also Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. p.184

their housewifely skills.⁴³ Lady Anne Southwell advocated hard work as the antidote to adultery for both sexes, and advised men, "marry in thy youth and strength of tyme / The daughter of some honest parentage".⁴⁴

The most immediately striking feature of the marital conduct books is their stress on a wife's natural and divinely-ordained subordination to her husband. For Griffith, the duties of a wife were summed up by the word "subjection", substantiating this by reference to Romans 7.2, Ephesians 5.24, Colossians 3.18, I Timothy 2.12 and Genesis 3.16.⁴⁵ Whately felt there was no particular biblical verse that "doth either directly contain, or plainly expresse the full dutie of the married couple". Nevertheless, he chose as the most apt scriptural reference on which to base his sermon *A Bride-Bush*, "The Husband is the Wives Head" (a reference to Ephesians 5.23) and provided a pledge for wives' recitation:

Mine husband is my superiour, my better; he hath authority and rule over mee: Nature hath given it unto him, having formed our bodies to tenderness, mens to hardnesse ... His will is my tye and tedder even of my desires and wishes. I will not strive against God and nature. Though my sinne hath made my place tedious, yet will I confess the truth, Mine husband is my superiour, my better.⁴⁶

A wife's adherence to the above should be evident from her being like a "wel-broken horse", so that she "turnes, at the least turning, stands at the least check of the riders bridle", while her deference should be manifested in "inward and outward" reverence for her husband.⁴⁷ Some women, at least, signed up to this. Elizabeth Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater, reasoned marriage was sometimes seen as "an unhappy life" because not all wives accepted and practised subordination; "an obedience must belong from the wife to the Husband ... since we are commanded, by those that are above our capacity of reason,

⁴³ See C.R. Thompson (ed.) *The Colloquies of Erasmus* (Chicago 1965) p.115; Edmund Tilney *A Briefe and pleasaunt discourse of duties in mariage* (London 1568) [unpaginated]; Snawsel *A Looking Glasse for Married Folkes*. pp.82-83

⁴⁴ 'Thou shalt not commit Adooltery' in Klene *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*. p.79; see also p.82 for a warning to women that they had no excuse for adultery as "the weaker creature[s]"

⁴⁵ Griffith *Bethel*. p.323

⁴⁶ Whately *Bride-Bush* pp.1,36

⁴⁷ Ibid. pp.43,37

by God himself". Women contemplating marriage should thus "inquire within themselves whether or no they could esteeme of such a person so as to value his Judmt" and whether they could "yield to his counsell".⁴⁸

The conduct book writers rehearsed at some length why wifely subjection was meet: Adam was created before Eve, giving man "the Birthright"; Eve was Adam's helper; and Eve "was the first deformed and so brought that into the world which brought the whole world into bondage". Male supremacy was therefore legitimised by original sin.⁴⁹ In addition, man had been imbued with "wisdome and understanding, and knowledge and discreation, to direct his whole familie". A husband should rule his household because he "provides all, defends all, answers all".⁵⁰ Male superiority and female inferiority therefore provided both the rationale and reason for wifely subjection. Some attention was paid to how wifely subjection should work in practice. Compared to a man's relationship with his children and servants, that with his wife should differ only in her being "more familiar", not in her being "more rude" to him. She should be "more dear, not lesse subject to him".⁵¹ Griffith disputed the equation of wives' subjection with slavery, explaining they were free to receive from their husbands "such familiarity, maintenance, and comforts, as no servants whatsoever can expect".⁵²

A wife's position was akin to the church's relationship with Christ. It should therefore be practised "without reasoning".⁵³ (For Lady Anne Southwell, it also meant husbands should follow Christ's example and not "curse, sweare, rayle at spouses error".⁵⁴)

48 Elizabeth Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater 'Considerations concerning Marriage' *Devotional Pieces by Elizabeth, Countess of Bridgewater* BL Egerton MS 607 ff.78[b],79[b]

49 Thomas Gataker *Marriage Duties Briefely Couched Together* (London 1626) pp.8.9; Griffith *Bethel* p.324

50 Smith *Preparative to Marriage* p.67; Griffith *Bethel* p.324

51 Whately *Bride-Bush* p.37

52 Griffith *Bethel* p.331

53 Ibid. p.324

54 Klene *Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book* p.80

While a woman could question whether a prospective husband was "a wise man, or a foole", she should cease such speculation upon marriage:

Whatsoever his unworthiness be, yet God thinkes him not unworthy to rule over thee:
whatsoever his unfitnessse be, yet he cannot be unfit to governe thee, as thou art unfit to
governe him.⁵⁵

Should a wife be wiser than her husband, she should exercise discretion and still acknowledge "him as her head".⁵⁶ Several writers cited the example of Abigail. Griffiths explained that her having called her husband a fool constituted a legitimate exception: she had been forced to deliver Nebal from destruction and she had not called him a fool to his face.⁵⁷ Within folklore, wifely abuse of husbands was a popular caricature of female 'vice', while some literate wives recorded their challenges to their partners on issues of household management and their frustration with their husbands' failings.⁵⁸ Thomas Powell advocated giving girls and women a practical education, but acknowledged the potential danger of equipping them so well for commerce that they could be independent and headstrong: by allowing a woman to act as "sole chapman ... she claims such a preheminance over her Husband, that she wil not be held to give him an account of her dealings, either in retaile, or whole sale" (see chapter four).⁵⁹

Most of the conduct book writers considered the thorny issue of tensions arising in a wife's fulfilling responsibilities to her husband and to God. Smith, rather simplistically, stated a wife should regard her husband's will as synonymous with God's. Whately and

⁵⁵ Griffith *Bethel*. pp.324-25

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.329; see also Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Government*. p.224; Gataker *Marriage Duties* p.11

⁵⁷ Griffith *Bethel*. p.329

⁵⁸ See D. Underdown *Revel, Riot and Rebellion. Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford 1987) pp.38-40; Letters from Maria Thynne to Thomas Thynne (1604/1605) transcribed in A. Wall (ed.) *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575-1611* Wiltshire Record Society (Devizes 1983) pp.32-34; *A pairt of Lady Cuninghame, Daughter of the Earl of Glencairne, that she had with her first husband, the Master of Evandale* (Edinburgh 1827) pp.10-11

⁵⁹ Thomas Powell *The Art of Thriving. Or, The plaine path-way to preferment. Together with the mysterie and misery of Lending and Borrowing* (London 1635)

Gataker, however, conceded she might receive contradictory orders, with the latter advising, "God is rather to be obeyed than man".⁶⁰ He also acknowledged the possibility of a wife obeying her husband from temporal, rather than spiritual, motives. Thus, he emphasised wifely submission had to be "a godly, a religious, a conscionable submission, performed not for worldly respects, or for feare of wrath, but ... for conscience sake".⁶¹

Linked with the espousal of wifely subjection was a stress on silence as a female virtue. A woman should be "meek, quiet, [and] submissive". In the presence of her husband, she should be silent. Whately qualified his command, stating, "I mean not abstinence from speech, but using a few words, and these low and milde, not eager, not loud". Women who flouted such advice - who "chase and scold with their husbands, and raile upon them, and revile them" - were "Staines of womankinde, blemishes of their sex, monsters in nature, next to harlots, if not the same with them". Accepting such women formed exceptions, Whately felt vociferous women were a particular problem and warned, "even women otherwise vertuous" should be mindful of "their faults in this behalf".⁶²

Such advice reinforced stereotypical views of women as shrews and scolds and the common linkage of a looseness in verbal expression with loose sexual morals (see four). That a stress on silence had a currency is supported by Philip Stubbes' boast his wife had never been contrary or fallen out with their neighbours.⁶³ However, it needs to be seen in relation to the advice afforded young gentlemen regarding their maintaining a

⁶⁰ Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. p.84; Whately *Bride-Bush*. p.42; Gataker *Mariage Duties*. p.30

⁶¹ Gataker *Mariage Duties*. p.27

⁶² Whately *Bride-Bush*. pp.38,40,39; see also Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. pp.38.39; Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. p.104; Nicholas Breton *The Good and the Badde, or the Descriptions of the Worthies and Unworthies of this Age* (London 1616; Amsterdam 1977) pp.28,29

⁶³ Philip Stubbes *A Christal Glasse for Christian Women* (London 1591) [unpaginated]

qualified silence in company (see chapter five), and a readiness by writers to praise individual women who spoke out against infidels and blasphemers.⁶⁴

A wife's apparel was also seen as a direct expression of her reverence, or lack of it, for her husband. Smith cited St. Paul's proclamation that a wife should "bee modest and orderly", since "garish apparel hath taught manie gossips to disdaine their husbands". Dod and Cleaver similarly perceived a wife's modesty in dress as a means of "rendering true obedience to her husband". The inverse - a wife sporting immodest and elaborate dress - was "the forerunner of adulterie"; indeed, "hee which hath such a wife, hath a fine plague".⁶⁵ Such an insistence on female modesty was not confined to the conduct books.⁶⁶ In 1620, James I charged the Bishop of London with instructing all his clergy "to inveigh vehemently and bitterly in theyre sermons against the insolencie of our women, and theyre wearing of brode brime hats, pointed dublets, theyre hair cut short or shorne".⁶⁷ These diktats show women's breaking accepted codes of dress was perceived as much more than an affront to fashion or decency; it posed a direct threat to social order and the sexual hierarchy. William Vaughan was more explicit: "frizled haire, embroidery, precious stones, gaudy raiments, and gold put about ... are the forerunners of adultery".⁶⁸ Again, though, such advice needs to be seen in relation to the counsel directed at young men about avoiding sartorial excess (not least to avoid charges of effeminacy; see chapter five).

⁶⁴ See, for example, Henry Williamson 'The Life of Mrs. Margaret Corbet, who dyed Anno Christi 1656' from Samuel Clarke 'Lives of Ten Eminent Divines' (1662) transcribed in S. Trill, K. Chedgzy & M. Osborne (eds.) *Lay by Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen. Women Writing in England, 1500-1700* (London 1997) p.213; Stubbes *Christal Glasse*. [unpaginated]

⁶⁵ Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. pp.86,87; Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. p.140

⁶⁶ See *An Homily against the Excess of Apparel*. Transcribed in *Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* Book II (London 1562; London 1817) pp.283-93

⁶⁷ Letter from John Chamberlain, 25 January 1620, quoted in L. Woodbridge *Women in the English Renaissance* (Brighton 1984) p.143

⁶⁸ Vaughan *Golden-grove*. 2nd Bk.Ch.8; see also Elizabeth Jocelin *The Mothers Legacie, to her Unborne Childe* (London 1624) p.33

The conduct book writers also defined a wife's subjection by her fundamental role. Her covert nature was epitomised in her being, "not a street wife like Thamar, nor a field wife like Dinah, but a housewife". The house should not be thought of as a "prison", but a "paradise".⁶⁹ Belief in the utter naturalness of the role - and, by corollary, the dangers of trying to act beyond it - is evident from an entry in the journal of John Winthrop. On 13th April 1645, he reported on the plight of the wife of Edward Hopkins, governor of Hartford, Connecticut. Because she had given "herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books", she had "fallen into a sad infirmity" and had lost "her understanding and reason". Winthrop reflected,

if she had attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper to men, whose minds are stronger, etc., she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honourably in the place God had set her.⁷⁰

The inference can be made that a wife's attempting to subvert her assigned place and usurp her husband's authority was perceived as disrupting not only their own relationship and household but the wider social order. Social distinction could never match "the league which both Gods ordinance and nature hath ordained between men and women".⁷¹ It was suggested by several authors that a woman who tried to dominate her husband risked losing her very humanity. Gataker asserted, "a mankinde woman, or a masterly woman is even a monster in nature".⁷² But these strong statements need to be seen in the context of wider contemporary thought that rendered the idea of equality of the sexes, and therefore equality of marriage partners, anathema.⁷³ Within a complex structure of interlocking notions of order and hierarchy, men and women had their

⁶⁹ Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. pp.79,60[80],61[81]; the same allusion and analogy also appears in Griffith *Bethel*. p.282

⁷⁰ John Winthrop *Journal* (1630-49) quoted in N.H. Keeble *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman* (London 1994) p.46

⁷¹ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Government*. p.147

⁷² Gataker *Mariage Duties*. p.10

⁷³ See E.M.W. Tillyard *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London 1963) pp.18-28

'rightful' positions. The writers' insistence on the fundamental division of sex, the disastrous implications of this being breeched, also needs to be compared with the gentlemanly conduct writers' emphasis on social status as the primary factor in differentiation of hierarchy (see chapter three). Different purposes thus produced different arguments within prescriptive literature, while it is clear that the ways in which married couples organised their lives and business afforded wives a far greater latitude for action and authority than simple prescription might suggest.

The rhetoric of benign inequality

The marital conduct writers' care to describe the proper balance of power within the framework of a husband's dominance and a wife's subjection negates some historians' claims this was the case.⁷⁴ Almost all the authors detailed the precise nature of a desirable marital relationship, and how the marital partnership should be exercised to manage family and household affairs successfully. Gouge defended his advice against accusations of having prescribed female servitude, explaining that a husband's potential authority over his wife - as defined by the Apostles - should not be exerted to its logical conclusion. Rather, a husband

ought not to exact whatsoever his wife was bound unto ... but he ought to make her a joynt Governour of the family with himselfe, and reserve the ordering of many things to her discretion.⁷⁵

By virtue of such an alliance, "a wife is called mistresse of the house, as well as the husband master of the house".⁷⁶ Whately advised that husbands and wives should operate

⁷⁴ K.M. Davies 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage' in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London 1981) pp.58-80; K.M. Davies 'The Sacred Condition of Equality - How Original were Puritan Doctrines of Marriage?' *Social History* 5 (1977) pp.566-67; P. Collinson *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London 1988) pp.70-2; R.V. Lucas 'Puritan Preaching and the Politics of the Family' in A.M. Haselkorn & B.S. Travitsky (eds.) *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print. Counterbalancing the Canon* (Amherst 1990) pp.224-40

⁷⁵ Gouge *Domestical Duties*. p.257

a governmental partnership for the "common benefite of themselves and their household".⁷⁷ Similarly, Fenner explained, "for the most part, the chief of the family are married folk, and so in common the governors of the house", making explicit the joint authority held by couples. Although a husband was the "head of the wife" or the "chief or foregovernor", the wife was his "fellow helper", charged with assisting "her husband, especially at home in all matters of the family". She should be "an image of the authority and wisdom of her husband in her whole administration", thereby sustaining his "glory and honor". In his absence, she should be his "eyes, foot and mouth", engaging in "espying, looking, admonishing, rebuking, and also giving alms to the poor".⁷⁸ Gouge likened the proper balance of power between marriage partners to that between a king and his magistrates, stressing that delegation of authority to the latter did not impair the monarch's power. Rather, it ensured it was "better emphasised"; "So it is in the family".⁷⁹ Smith also drew an analogy between the political or legal delegation of authority, stating a husband

must divide offices, and affaires, and goods with her, causing her to bee feared and revered, and obeied of her children and servants like himselfe; for she is an under officer in his common weale, and therefore she must be assisted and borne out, like his deputie, as the Prince standeth with his Magistrates for his owne quiet, because they are legges with beare him up.⁸⁰

Importantly, a husband's credibility and authority rested on his supporting and endorsing that of his wife. William Perkins drew on Aristotle's comparison of various styles of rule to explain how a husband should treat members of the household: he should exercise tyranny over his servants; "a power regal over his children"; and "a power aristocraticall" over his wife. Significantly, Perkins further counselled that a husband's power over his wife should be "agreeable to the honour and dignity of the married

76 Ibid. p.258

77 Whately *Bride-Bush*. p.15

78 Fenner 'The Order of Household' in Davis *Sexuality and Gender*. pp.174-75,178

79 Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. p.259; see also Whately *Bride-Bush*. p.16

80 Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. pp.66-67

state".⁸¹ That some couples abided by this advice, or at least were keen to show adherence to it, is shown by Lucy Hutchinson's assurance that her husband had "govern'd by persuasion".⁸²

The proper balance of power between a married couple should be manifested in several ways. There should be "a communication, a consent of counsel and will between the husband and wife". Indeed, a husband should accept his wife's advice "in some things", since her counsel "is not alwaies out of season". (The judicious use of the words "not alwaies" cannot be ignored, nor that it was deemed necessary to give such advice at all.) Justifying such a statement, Griffith cited God's instruction to Abraham to take note of Sarah's advice. A wife's position of subordination did not mean she should blindly execute her husband's commands; while she should be mindful of her husband's wisdom and ultimate authority, "it is not meant that the wife should not imploy her knowledge and discretion which God hath given her, in helping, and for the good of her Husband".⁸³ There was therefore a clear expectation that women should play an active role in key important household concerns. In this sense, the conduct books more directly mirrored what happened in practice.

The implicit thinking of the conduct book writers was that the day-to-day management of household matters fell within a wife's remit. A husband should not dictate what she should "doe in all matters domesticall; but in some she being discreet to leave her to her owne liberty, and judgement". He "should let his wife rule under him, and give her leave to know more than himselfe", so that he could devote his attention to "greater

⁸¹ William Perkins 'Christian Oeconomy, or a Short Survey on the Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Family, According to the Scriptures' transcribed in I. Beward (ed.) *The Works of William Perkins* (London 1970) p.438

⁸² Lucy Hutchinson *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, Governor of Nottingham Castle and Town ... written by his widow Lucy* (London 1806) p.12

⁸³ Griffith *Bethel*. pp.328,320; see also Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. p.224 and Perkins 'Christian Oeconomy' p.428

matters".⁸⁴ Whately also advocated joint rule over some issues; "they must ioyne together in the admonishing or encouraging, in reprovng, or if neede be also correcting their inferiours", being "carefull to maintayne each others authority to ye full".⁸⁵ Referring to Genesis 16.16, Smith suggested the appropriateness of a sexual divide in some matters, so that a husband might discipline male servants and a wife female ones to ensure a man's sensibilities were not "shorneth" by being reprov'd by a woman and "a maides nature" was not "corrupted with the stripes of a man".⁸⁶ Such a prescription for dividing responsibilities reflects a concern that divisions of social status were not confused by divisions of gender. Other source types, however, suggest this was less a concern (see chapter three).

Vaughan reflected on a wife's mixed role: she must "carefully oversee her household, and bring her children and servants in the feare of God".⁸⁷ She could usefully put "her husband in minde both of the dutie of family prayer" and "of the time of perfoming it". She could also encourage him, gather the family together, and exhort respective members "to be forward" in their piety.⁸⁸ Gouge therefore disputed that St.Paul's assertion, "A woman is not to teach", had currency in the household, contesting that the command referred only to "publicke assemblies, and churches". In the privacy of the family, he argued, a wife "may, and ought to teach".⁸⁹ Smith regarded catechising children as both parents' responsibility, while Gataker listed "the diligent and careful education" of children as a mother's duty.⁹⁰

84 Whately *Bride-Bush* pp.24,17-18; see also Gouge *Domesticall Duties* p.259 and Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. p.168

85 Whately *Bride-Bush*. pp.17-18

86 Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. p.97

87 Vaughan *Golden-grove*. 2nd Bk. Ch.8

88 Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. p.259

89 Ibid. 258

90 Smith *Preparative to Mariage* pp.101-105; Gataker *Mariage Duties* p.20

A wife's involvement in managing money and property was an issue on which the conduct book writers deliberated in some detail. Gouge's assertion that a wife should not have authority over disposing "the common goods of the family without, or against her husbands consent" had met with hostility from his female congregants in Blackfriars.⁹¹ In self-defence, Gouge stressed that he did not advocate that a wife's freedom should be curtailed to the extent she had no control over

the proper goods of a wife, no nor overstrictly to such goods as are set apart for the use of the family, nor to extraordinary cases, not alwaies to an expresse consent, nor to such husbands as are impotent, or farre and long absent.⁹²

Gouge's written advice, therefore, (if not his utterances from the pulpit) on the limits of a wife's domain over things financial had significant caveats. Whately's warning that married couples should not make "private purses for themselves" seems to have been directed at husbands as much as wives.⁹³

Dod and Cleaver, meanwhile, stressed joint governance: a husband should have "the custodie, and chiefe government of the goods of the house", but trust his wife to manage the property; it was best that "each alike shall undertake the custodie and employment of the same".⁹⁴ As a contingency, a wife should assume full authority during her husband's absence. Griffith's analogy between the husband as the sun and the wife as the moon was echoed by Sir John Strode in his advice to his son (whether consciously or not cannot be ascertained). Once married, the young man should let his wife "receive light from thee as doth the moon from the sun. When thou art present, let all be subject to thee; when absent, let all submit to her."⁹⁵ Above all, a contractual and reciprocal

⁹¹ See Collinson *Birth-pangs of English Protestantism*, p.71 for the suggestion that the women in Gouge's parish of 'fashionable' families would not have been typical of those elsewhere in England.

⁹² Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. Preface [p.3b]; see also Griffith *Bethel*, pp.331-32 and Perkins 'Christian Oeconomy', p.439

⁹³ Whately *Bride-Bush*, p.15

⁹⁴ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*, pp.199-200

⁹⁵ Sir John Strode 'Advice to his son' (1632) in C. Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell Symphony* (London

partnership was described. This had simple, pragmatic benefits; if husbands fulfilled their duties, Waterhouse reasoned, wives were more likely to fulfil theirs.⁹⁶

The conduct book writers therefore described an intricate balance of power within marriage. This rested fundamentally on belief in the natural subordination of a wife to her husband. But it allowed her a considerable involvement in household management and religious duties. That marriage should not simply constitute wifely subjection is further substantiated by the authors' insistence that marriage should form an affective and loving relationship.⁹⁷ Smith stressed the essential basis for marriage was "a knitting and ioyning together" of a man and woman:

unlesse there be ioining of harts, and knitting of affections together, it is not a Marriage indeed, but in shew and name, and shall dwell in a house like poysons in a stomach, and one shall be sicke of the other.⁹⁸

Similarly, Griffith asserted that marriage partners should have an "intyre affection to each other". Love played both a temporal and spiritual role, serving as "an excellent preservative of Gods worship ... and of their Privitie, and of their Peace, and of their Chastitie, both of body and minde".⁹⁹ Moreover, "the union and conjunction of the hearts[s]" of marriage partners formed "the true naturall mother of all marriage duties".¹⁰⁰ Conjugal relations between husband and wife were advocated not only for procreation and the preservation of chastity, but to strengthen affection for one another.¹⁰¹ Whately stressed that a husband and wife "must lovingly, willingly and familiarly communicate unto themselves, which is the best meanes to continue and

1945) p.52; see Griffith *Bethel*. p.326; see also Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. pp.174-50

⁹⁶ Waterhouse *Gentleman's Monitor*. p.151; see also Vaughan *Golden-grove*. 2nd Bk. Ch.7

⁹⁷ See Lucas 'Puritan Preaching and the Politics of the Family' pp.224-40 for a counter-argument that the conduct book writers' advice was a ruse to persuade women to acquiesce in subordination

⁹⁸ Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. p.56

⁹⁹ Griffith *Bethel*. pp.288,290

¹⁰⁰ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. p.119

¹⁰¹ Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. pp.221,222

nourish their mutuall and naturall love".¹⁰² To cite modesty as grounds for avoiding sexual relations was, "to speake the least, a signe of greate infirmitie and a cause of much iniquitie".¹⁰³

In espousing the essential role of conjugal relations for maintaining unity, the conduct writers emphasised that lovemaking must be "sanctified". To emphasise this, Perkins drew upon Hebrews 13.4 and I Timothy 4.3-4, while Whately counselled, "Man and woman must not come together as brute creatures and unreasonable beasts, through haste or desire; but must see their Maker in his ordinance, and crave his blessing solemnly as at meals".¹⁰⁴ On a temporal level, Griffith warned couples to be cautious "That you be not too uxorious; for such violent love is seldome perpetuall; but settles at last upon infinite jealousies, which crucifie instead of comforting".¹⁰⁵ Although stressing the importance of sex within marriage, the conduct writers were concerned to draw a firm distinction between relations between a husband and wife and sex manifested outside marriage in fornication and adultery. However, their advice also drew a more subtle distinction between controlled, divinely-ordained love and unrestrained passion within marriage itself. The latter could be as bad and damaging as extra- or pre-marital relations, as explored in the next chapter.¹⁰⁶

While advice on the importance of emotional and physical love was given to both spouses, the conduct books' more specific counsel focused almost exclusively on a husband's affection for his wife. In part, this reflects the male perspective of the works.

102 Whately *Bride-Bush*. p.43

103 Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. p.222

104 Perkins 'Christian Oeconomy' p.424; Whately *Bride-Bush*. p.43

105 Griffith *Bethel*. p.424; see also Whately *Bride-Bush*. p.43

106 See Henderson & McManus *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England 1540-1640* (Urbana & Chicago 1985) p.48; S. Rowbotham *Hidden from History. Rediscovering Women in History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (London 1973) p.6; Davies 'Continuity and change in Literary Advice on Marriage'. pp.55,73; M. Spufford *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-century England* (London 1981) pp.63,160; J. Hale *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London 1993) pp.428-29 for early-modern attitudes towards sexual activity

But it also indicates the fundamental nature of the relationship prescribed between marriage partners, made overt by Gataker's assertion, "love goeth downward: dutie commeth upward". He explained, "a wives maine duties here is subjection, the mans principally love".¹⁰⁷ A husband's duty to love his wife stemmed from her having "borne and brought him forth children" and her having "forsaken hir fathers goods and riches to follow him and to suffer with him both good and evill".¹⁰⁸ A husband should love his wife for her Christian virtues, not for her physical beauty or wealth, showing his affection "simply and faithfully, and not for any utilitie or pleasure" and taking care to "lovingly defend her and keepe her from all iniuries, and all evils, as his own bodie".¹⁰⁹

A husband's authority over his wife should therefore be tempered and qualified by the love. But belief in the intrinsic inequality between men and women precluded an advocacy of equality by the conduct book writers even within their affective relationship. Other writers implied a greater emotional equality in the marriage relationship.¹¹⁰ John Heydon, writing under the pseudonym of Eugenius Theodidactus, stated marriage was "the Crown of blessings, when in one woman one finds both a Wife and a friend".¹¹¹ At the heart of the marital relationship should be a mutuality and tenderness, sustained by a belief in women's forming worthy partners for men (see chapter nine and ten). Elizabeth Egerton expounded on the husband-wife relationship. A wife should not be

in such awe of him, as a servant of his(.) Master, as not to speake, to contradict the least word he saith, but to have an affection, and love to him, as to a friend, and so to speak their mind, and opinion freely to him, yet not value him ye lesse.

¹⁰⁷ Gataker *Marriage Duties*. pp.5,6; see also Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. p.62; Griffith *Bethel*. pp.289-90

¹⁰⁸ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. pp.176-77

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. pp.169-71

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Jeremy Taylor *The Measures and Offices of Friendship* 2nd edn (London 1657; New York 1984) pp.80,94-95,iii

¹¹¹ Eugenius Theodidactus [John Heydon] *Advice to a Daughter, In Opposition to Advice to a Son. Or Directions for your Better Conduct through the various and most important Encounters of this Life*. 2nd edn (London 1659) p.69

Ideally, a husband should have "a reciprocall affection to his wife", making each "both blest in one another". Indeed, if a wife was so "low in spirit to be in subjection, for every word" she would make her husband "feare he is troublesome, and yt shee had rather be alone then in his company". Such a state of affairs would deviate from the companionship that couples should enjoy, endangering their relationship and tempting each into seeking company with others.¹¹² Although from this counsel it can be inferred that a wife had a responsibility to preserve an appropriate relationship with her husband, rather than *vice versa*, she should fulfil this responsibility by being more assertive than the established notion of a submissive, near-silent wife might have us believe.

The conduct book authors diverged in their views on the acceptability and efficacy of wife-beating. Whately was perhaps the most ambivalent on the subject, stating that a husband *should* be able to assert his authority over his wife by skill, rather than violence: "Authority is like the arts of Logic and Rhetoric, that must in speaking be used, and yet concealed". It should therefore be preserved with subtlety. Just as a wife's timidity could aggravate her husband, a husband's beating his wife would lead her to despise him, thereby undermining, rather than bolstering, his supremacy. An angry wife should be subdued "by praise and happiness"; "open and expresse, much lesse violent commandings" should only be resorted to if "shee bee more than ordinary unruly".¹¹³

While Whately's rationale for a husband's not abusing his wife physically was primarily that it would endanger his superior position, Smith and Dod and Cleaver spoke against the practice more emphatically and from a greater point of principle. A wife, they stressed, was "a free citizen" in the household who should be seen by her husband as his own flesh.¹¹⁴ Violence against her was therefore nonsensical. Dod and Cleaver attacked

¹¹² Egerton 'Considerations concerning Marriage' *Devotional Pieces*. BL Egerton MS. 607 ff.79[b],80[b]

¹¹³ Whately *Bride-Bush*. pp.19,20,29

¹¹⁴ Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. p.72; Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*.

husbands who viewed their marriage as a "dominion" over which they ruled, while Griffith denigrated wife-beaters as being worse than beasts, citing the marriage vow that partners must love and cherish one another until separated by death.¹¹⁵ Thus, some of the conduct book writers saw wife-beating as antithetical to marriage. The essential espousal of a framework of a husband's authority over his subordinate wife, however, meant that the issue of husband-beating was not even raised within the books. But this is not to say that broader types of female-imposed abuse did not exist as a strong strain of humour elsewhere.¹¹⁶

Aside from the fulfilment of Christian duty, a key rationale for the marital conduct books' advice was maintaining peace within the household and, by corollary, in wider society. Concerned with abating discord, Gouge warned a husband to "be watchfull over himselfe that he gave no offence to his wife", while a wife should try not to offend her husband. Conversely, each partner should not be quick to take offence.¹¹⁷ Advising that a couple should not react to one another's chiding, Dod and Cleaver suggested, "where the husband is deafe, and the wife blinde, the marriage is quiet and free from dissension".¹¹⁸ If a couple allowed a dispute to develop, Gouge stressed, "Wrath must not lie in bed with two such bedfellowes; neither may they part beds for wrath sake". Rather, the argument should be resolved before the end of the day.¹¹⁹

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the principal onus for dissipating arguments lay with the wife. Gataker explained that, by virtue of her subordinate position, it was a wife's duty to "seeke reconcilment".¹²⁰ Indeed, if she had caused a ruction, Dod and Cleaver stated

pp.213-14; see also Klene *Commonplace Book of Lady Ann Southwell-Sibthorpe*. p.81

¹¹⁵ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. p.215; Griffith *Bethel*. p.296

¹¹⁶ See M. Ingram 'Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking in Early Modern England' in B. Reay (ed.) *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-century England* (London 1985) pp.166-97

¹¹⁷ Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. p.288

¹¹⁸ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement*. p.189

¹¹⁹ Gouge *Domesticall Duties*. p.229

¹²⁰ Gataker *Marriage Duties*. p.7

"shee ought never to rest untill shee hath pacified him, and gotten his favour againe". Should her husband blame her unjustly, "shee must beare it patiently", and be happy in his company, "but yet not with too much lightnes".¹²¹ Linked with the importance of preserving peace was the writers' insistence on couples honouring the privacy of their marriage. A wife abused by her husband should lament his cruelty in private rather than "runne[ing] forth, and cry[ing] in the open streets". To publicise one another's "faults and frailties" was to commit "a monstrous treacherie", and "defile[d] their own nest(s)".¹²²

Concluding remarks

It is too simplistic to see the marital conduct books as a straightforward advocacy of male authority over women. Although this formed their essential premise, they presented a complex code for the husband-wife relationship and for dividing household duties and responsibilities. A wife was defined as being subject to her husband, with her covert nature epitomised in her status as housewife. But the conduct books identified significant areas in which wives should exercise full discretion and promoted the legitimacy of a wife advising her husband. However unreasonable this appears to late twentieth-century eyes, it constitutes a quite different prescriptive ideal from total female subjection.

The writers' espousal of clearly-demarcated, gender-defined roles has to be seen in relation to wider contemporary thinking about the divinely-ordained and natural order and the belief that subversion of the order would cause social dislocation, even chaos on a cosmic scale.¹²³ This provided a powerful rationale for seeking to maintain the *status quo*, including established sexual and social hierarchies. What we know from personal

¹²¹ Dod & Cleaver *Godlie Forme of Household Governement* p.218; see Stubbes *Christal Glasse*. [unpaginated] for stress on how his wife had mirrored his emotions and moods

¹²² Griffith *Bethel*. p.297; Whately *Bride-Bush*. p.13

¹²³ See Sharpe *Early Modern England*. p.118-20; J.R. Farr *Authority and Sexuality in Early Modern Burgundy* (Oxford 1995) pp.19-22

letters and memoirs is that practice allowed - indeed, demanded - greater latitude in married couples' roles and relationships than that advocated by the marital conduct books, while prescripts written for different purposes could afford to pay little attention to the sexual hierarchy altogether (see chapter three). The marital conduct book authors were keen to depict marriage as an affective relationship in which a husband's superiority over his wife was tempered by benevolence. While it was deemed unacceptable - and, indeed, disastrous - for the prescribed order to be subverted, the marital relationship described was essentially one of 'benign inequality'. It is thinking on, and experiences of, conjugal love to which the final two chapters turn.

Chapter nine

Prescriptions on conjugal love

Considering love can help us gain deeper insights into how emotional experiences and family life have changed through time and across different cultures and societies.¹ When love and marriage became expected and assumed bedfellows has exercised a number of historians, resulting in the production of varying schema for how love has been expressed, channelled and controlled over time. Duby has concluded that love and wedlock were seen as antithetical in twelfth-century French thinking: marriage thwarted the freedom love required to flourish.² Views seem to have changed by the thirteenth century, with sermons studied by d'Avray and Tausche revealing little that differed substantially from ideas expressed in the seventeenth.³ Macfarlane has contended that "romantic love" was well-established by Chaucer's time, with marriage enjoying a status from at least the fourteenth century that relates closely to that within contemporary thinking. Drawing on artistic, prescriptive and personal literature produced between 1300 and 1840, he has deduced married couples consistently loved one another. Any signs of a strengthening of expression across the centuries he has attributed to a growing informality and modernity of language.⁴ While supporting this argument to some degree, this thesis disputes use of the term "romantic"; it was a more rational and pragmatic kind of love that sustained many courtships and many more marriages in the early-modern period and that was prized within contemporary prescription, as we have seen in previous chapters.

¹ See W.J. Goode 'The Theoretical Importance of Love' in R.F. Winch & C.W. Goodman (eds.) *Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family* 3rd edn (New York 1968); see also L.C. Freeman *Marriage without Love: Mate-selection in Non-western Societies* in Winch & Goodman *Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family* p.457; L. Febvre 'Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past' in P. Burke (ed.) *A New Kind of History from the Writings of Febvre* (London 1973) p.14; M. Poster *Critical Theory of the Family* (London 1978) p.xvii; H. Medick & D.W. Sabeen (eds.) *Interest and Emotions: Essays on the Study of the Family and Kinship* (Cambridge 1984) pp.10,12; J. Casey *The History of the Family* (Oxford 1989) pp.86-87; L. Roper *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London 1994) pp.10-11; I. Singer *The Nature of Love Vol.2 - Courtly and Romantic* (Chicago 1994) p.2; D. Cressy *Birth, Marriage and Death. Ritual, Religion and Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford 1997) p.261

² G. Duby *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages* trans. J. Dunnett (Oxford 1994) pp.31-32

³ D.L. d'Avray & M. Tausche 'Marriage Sermons in "Ad status" Collections of the Central Middle Ages' in N. Beriou & D.L. d'Avray *Modern Questions about Medieval Sermons. Essays on Marriage, Death, History and Sanctity* (Italy 1994) pp.77-134

⁴ A. Macfarlane *Marriage and Love in England, 1300-1840* (Oxford 1986) p.194

However, other historians have been circumspect about love's forming a precursor to - and normal element of - marriage, proposing timeframes that effectively deny that courting and married couples genuinely loved one another before the eighteenth century.⁵ That there have been such widely varying views on, and reasons given, for the status of love are partly attributable to the problems of definition that are inherent in the subject, together with a failure properly to define what is being considered. In particular, love has suffered from a simplistic equation with sex. Laslett's *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* makes no overt reference to love *per se* and, in fact, it is not about love at all. The "illicit love" with which Laslett is concerned is sexual activity outside marriage that flouted constraints to curb behaviour between sexual maturity and marriage and that resulted in illegitimate births. Whether those who fuelled the bastardy rates loved one another is not considered.⁶ (Indeed, this would not be possible to deduce from the data on which Laslett's work is based.) Love is simply used as a euphemism for sex. Flandrin has similarly treated attitudes towards sex as being those towards love. His distinction between Catholic and Protestant perceptions and experiences of love in early-modern Europe therefore rests on English puritans' more celebratory approach to sex within marriage in comparison to their French, Catholic peers.⁷

We need to be more specific about what we are considering. Segalen has warned that the culturally-specific signs of love can easily be overlooked and that we should not doubt the depth or sincerity of emotion if it is not expressed in familiar ways.⁸ Concurring

⁵ E. Shorter *The Making of the Modern Family* (London 1976) pp.148-49; R. Trumbach *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinships and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-century England* (New York 1978) pp.3,288,191; L. Stone *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York 1977) pp.55,60

⁶ P. Laslett *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations. Essays in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge 1977)

⁷ J.L. Flandrin *Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality* trans. R. Southern (Cambridge 1979) pp.161-67; see M. Segalen *Love and Power in Peasant Society* trans. S. Matthews (Oxford 1983) p.15

⁸ Segalen *Historical Anthropology of the Family* pp.129-30, 15-17; see also Medick & Sabeian *Interest and Emotion*. p.12; Singer *The Nature of Love. Vol.2.* p.2

with this, Gillis has argued that the love generally experienced in "premodern courtships" was not about the "self- and mutual discovery we have come to associate with romance" but rooted in individuals' material lives. This did not mean that love was not discussed; "tradeing and how to gett wives" - two thoroughly intertwined subjects - formed major topics of male conversation. Women's outlook was likely to have been little different.⁹ Margaret Cavendish's *The Tobaccanist* referred to "two maides talking of Husbandes, for that for the most part is the theame of their discourses, and the subject of their thoughts" (see chapters seven and ten).¹⁰

The term 'romantic love' is problematical. It carries negative connotations, suggesting a deep, but short-lived and selfish, emotional attachment with a sexual dimension based on idealistic, imaginary or fictitious perceptions of its object, made more poignant if unrequited.¹¹ It also has specific temporal links with the artistic movement of the nineteenth century, thereby lessening its relevance to earlier periods.¹² It suggests a narrow and cynical reading of sexual love between adults or adolescents, negating the kind of emotion that is likely to have formed the foundation of happy marriages in early-modern England and that was championed in contemporary advice literature.¹³

⁹ J.R. Gillis *A World of Their Own Making. A History of Myth and Ritual in Family Life* (Oxford 1996) pp.133-37

¹⁰ Margaret Cavendish 'Natures Pictures, Drawn by Francis Pencil to the Life' (1656) in S. Trill, K. Chedgzoy & M. Osborne (eds.) *Lay by Your Needles, Take the Pen. Women Writing in England, 1500-1700* (London 1997) p.203; see also M. MacDonald *Mystical Bedlam. Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge 1981) pp.88-89 for findings on the prominence of anxieties around courtship and marriage and the prevalence of "romantic love"

¹¹ See R.A. Johnson *The Psychology of Romantic Love* (London 1984) p.193 on the latter point; see C. Lasch *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York 1977) pp.143-44 for a challenge to negative interpretations of romantic love

¹² Oxford English Dictionary Vol.XIV 2nd edn (Oxford 1989) pp.65-66; C.H. & W.M. Whitley *Sex and Morals* (London 1967) p.60ff

¹³ See F. Mount *The Subversive Family: An Alternative History of Love and Marriage* (London 1982) pp.95-96; F.X. Newman (ed.) *The Meaning of Courtly Love: Papers of the First Annual Conference of the Centre for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies* (New York 1972) for scepticism about the concept of courtly love; see Singer *The Nature of Love* Vol.2 p.15 on the value of courtly and romantic love as divergent 'ideals'; R. Brain *Friends and Lovers* (St.Albans 1977) pp.235-44

Neither an umbilical linking of love with economics nor a faith in individuals' ability to control their own emotions sufficiently interrogates past sentiment. But to assume that societal change has had little impact on individuals' experience, views and expressions of love seems equally unhelpful, as does a reading of all displays of affection - from overt declarations of passion to gratitude that a deceased spouse was a good parent - as "romantic love". A more precise definition of love and a more sensitive exploration of its signs are needed. The contexts and factors that shaped, conditioned, channelled and controlled both experiences and expectations of the emotion in early-modern society have to be understood. Expressions of love not founded on equality - and that fail to accord with more modern notions of love - cannot simply be discarded or mistrusted. Rather, they have to be seen in the context of contemporary notions of contractual obligation and reciprocal responsibilities, together with concepts of natural and social order.

This chapter and the next consider love that sustained intense and exclusive relationships between men and women, that had at least a *frisson* of sexuality and that was sanctioned by marriage, had marriage as its aim, or was seen as corollary of marriage. While sexual attraction was a significant dimension, it was not the only one.¹⁴ Kant's distinction between "pathological love" - an essentially passive experience not willed by an individual - and "practical love" - a conscious process of developing a love for another person - seems apposite in the context of early-modern conjugal love and related perceptions and attitudes. Pathological love has parallels with the precise definition of romantic love suggested above and threatens morality and society, while practical love underpins them.¹⁵ The distinctions between *agape*, *eros* and *caritas* are also relevant, although were not raised explicitly in the literature considered.

¹⁴ See M. Foucault *The Care of the Self - The History of Sexuality Volume 3*. trans. R. Hurley (London 1986) pp.79-80,182; M. Fisher *Personal Love* (London 1990) pp.40-43, 94

¹⁵ Referred to in Nussbaum *Love's Knowledge* pp.336-37

Printed perceptions and attitudes

It would be naive to expect a uniform view of love in early-modern England, and this is not what emerges from published sources. Diverse attitudes and perceptions were expounded. Love was seen as an irrational force that plagued happiness like "work on holy-day" or "tooth-ache".¹⁶ It was "a sweet bitterness, a delightfull disease, ... and a sweet death".¹⁷ It was the strongest emotion that could be experienced, with "the love of an affectionate mother to hir naturall childe" forming the most "forcible" and "naturally manifest" of all.¹⁸ It represented a mutual and reciprocal affection, of which marriage formed the highest manifestation.¹⁹ At the same time, it was a dangerous premise on which to base wedlock because of its doubtful morality and permanence. To some, it was an impossibility within marriage.²⁰ But it also gave a marriage validity, ensuring a man and woman's "knitting or ioyning together" and, more cynically, secured women's willingness to act as good wives.²¹ It was thus marriage's essential ingredient, "the true naturall mother of all marriage duties", and a religious obligation.²² It was celebrated as "a

¹⁶ Sir Walther Raleigh 'A Description of Love' (1593) in J. Hollander & F. Kermode (eds.) *The Literature of Renaissance England* (Oxford 1973) pp.337-38

¹⁷ Edward Waterhouse *The Gentleman's Monitor: Or, a Sober Inspection into the Vertues, Vices, and Ordinary Means, of the Rise and Decay of Men and Families* (London 1665) p.150

¹⁸ Elizabeth Grymeston *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (London 1604; Amsterdam 1977) A3; see also Dorothy Leigh *The Mothers Blessing: or, The godly Counsaile of a Gentle-woman, not long since deceased, left behind her for her children* 7th edition (London 1621) pp.11-12

¹⁹ Jeremy Taylor *The Measures and Offices of Friendship* 2nd edn (London 1662; New York, 1984) pp.80-81

²⁰ See J.L. Vives *Instruction of a chrysten woman* Bk.1, Ch.16, trans. Richard Hyrde (1529), quoted in M.B. Rose *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca 1988) p.16; Sir Walter Raleigh 'Instructions to His Son and to Posterity' 2nd edn (1632) transcribed in L.B. Wright (ed.) *Advice to a Son: Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh and Francis Osborne* (New York 1962) pp.20-21; Michel de Montaigne 'On Friendship', Book 1 of *Essays*, trans. J.M. Cohen (London 1958) p.95; see Duby *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*. pp.31-32

²¹ Henry Smith *A Preparative to Mariage* (London 1591; Amsterdam 1976) p.56; see also Waterhouse *Gentleman's Monitor*. p.151; Mary Astell *Reflections on Marriage* 3rd edn (London 1706) printed in B. Hill *The First English Feminist. 'Reflections on Marriage' and Other Writings of Mary Astell* (Aldershot 1986) p.105; M.J. Ezell *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill 1987) p.106

²² John Dod & Robert Cleaver *A Godlie Forme of Household Governement: For the Ordering of Private Families, According to the Direction of Gods Word* (London 1612) p.19; see also Matthew Griffith Bethel: or, *A Forme for Families. In which all sorts, of both Sexes, are so squared, and framed by the word of God, as they may best serve in their severall places, for usefull pieces in God's building* (London 1633) p.188; Richard Snawsel *A Looking-Glasse for Married Folkes: Or, a profitable conference, between foure women and one man, touching their behaviours toward God and their husbands, and what they ought to be: and also the duty of husbands toward their wives* (London 1631; Amsterdam 1975) Preface, pp.20,94-95,101-102

celestiall harmonie, Of likely harts ... joyne[d] together in sweet sympathy".²³ More pragmatically, it epitomised a man's responsibility to his wife, to which she should respond with respect and obedience (see chapter eight).²⁴ However, it was also emasculating and threatened to reduce human interaction to superficiality and cowardice.²⁵ When too intense, it gave rise to lovesickness, suffered by "women ... as wel as men" and to which "yong persons" were especially prone. Those worst affected were "ravished by their wittes". The solution was simply not to love too much - "let no man set his love so far, but that he may withdraw it betime".²⁶ This advice from Andrew Boorde seems peculiarly 'unisexual'; lovesickness was more commonly perceived in the early-modern period as a female manifestation of lack of self-control, in contrast to its status as a 'heroic malady' during the Middle Ages.²⁷

Such widely varying perceptions and ambivalent attitudes towards love can be attributed partly to personal perspectives, no doubt shaped by individuals' experience. More importantly, published attitudes hinged on differing readings of the fundamental nature of love and relationships between men and women. Raleigh's satirical portrayal of love as deceitful and a carrier of sorrow can be linked to his equating love with short-lived, lustful impulses. Implicit in his poem is a warning to fellow men about the dangers of women, reflecting a belief in female duplicity, inconstancy, rapacious sexual appetite, and obsessive interest in love.²⁸ That love was strongly linked with the female - and in

²³ Edmund Spenser *Hymne in Honour of Beautie* quoted in J.A. Quitsland 'Spenser and the Patronesses of the *Fowre Hymnes*; "Ornaments of All True Love and Beautie"' in M.P. Hannay (ed.) *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works* (Ohio 1985) pp.189-90; see also Edmund Tilney *The Flower of Friendship* in V. Wayne (ed.) *The Flower of Friendship: A Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage* (Ithaca 1992) p.110

²⁴ Thomas Gataker *Marriage Duties Briefely Couched Together* (London 1626) pp.5,6; Smith *Preparative to Mariage* p.62; Griffith *Bethel*. pp.289-90

²⁵ T.M. Cranfill (ed.) *Barnabe Rich. Riche his Farewell to Militarie Profession, 1581* (Austin 1959) Dedications 'To the right courteous gentlewomen bothe of England and Irelande' and 'To the Noble Souldiers bothe of Englande and Irelande', passim

²⁶ Andrew Boorde *The Breviarie of health* (London 1575) f.62

²⁷ See M.F. Wack *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages. The 'Viaticum' and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia 1990) pp.110,123

²⁸ See Michel de Montaigne *Sue des Vers de Virgil*. trans. C.V. Norman (Forence 1930) pp.30,39; I. Maclean *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science*

opposition to men - is suggested by Barnabe Rich's citation of Mars and Venus as the figureheads of masculine and feminine life-styles.²⁹ However, Raleigh also alerted his son to men's fickle sentimental and sexual feelings.³⁰

John Preston provided perhaps the clearest definition of love, stating it was "nothing else but a disposition of the will, whereby it cleaves or makes forward to some good that is agreeable to it selfe". It manifested itself in two ways: "it would have the thing it loves to be preserved" and "a man that loves, would have it his, and therefore he drawes neere to it, or else he drawes the thing neere to him".³¹ Preston described three types of love: "a naturall love that God hath placed in the heart of every man", such as love of self, love of one's children, and love of one's wealth; "a vicious and sinfull love, that carries it the wrong way to love sinfull things"; and a "spirituall love, which sets limits to this naturall love", echoing strongly the notions *agape*, *eros* and *caritas*. The "spirituall love" should guide "naturall love" and negate "sinfull lusts".³² Preston drew an analogy between adulterous love killing "the conjugall love of the wife to the husband", with "love of the world" quenching "your love to the Lord". Earthly love was acceptable provided it did not eclipse the spiritual.³³

You may know whether your love to any creature, to any sport or recreation be adulterous or no. A chast wife may love many men besides her husband; but if it once begin to lessen her love to her husband, that is an adulterous love ...³⁴

in *European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge 1980) pp.16,17,59

²⁹ Cranfill *Farewell to Militarie Profession*. Dedications, passim

³⁰ Raleigh 'Instructions to His Son and to Posterity'. p.21; see S. Davies *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature* (Oxford 1986) pp.4,9; S. Anglo 'The Courtier - The Renaissance and Changing Ideals' in A.G. Dickens (ed.) *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty, 1400-1800* (London 1977) pp.33-53 for ideas about the development of a more positive attitudes towards the feminine and what it was perceived to encapsulate.

³¹ John Preston *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love* (London 1630) pp.6-7

³² Ibid. pp.10-11

³³ Ibid. pp.106-107

³⁴ Ibid. p.107

Preston thus showed a strong understanding of individuals' capacity to experience different types of love.³⁵ From his words we can infer that there was no real tension between different readings of the emotion and this is reinforced by the writing of others. Richard Snawsel's ideal love, depicted as a long-lasting physical and emotional attachment fostered over time and strengthened by a mutually-held spiritual love, was quite different from the negative image evoked by Sir Walter Raleigh.³⁶ Jeremy Taylor extolled marriage as "the queen of friendships", asserting that "some Wives have been the best friends in the world". In so doing, he challenged directly "those Cynics who would not admit your [female] sex to the community of noble friendship" (inspired by questioning from the poet Katherine Phillips).³⁷ Writing under the pseudonym Eugenius Theodidactus, John Heydon similarly stated, it was "the Crown of blessings, when in one woman a man finds both a Wife and a friend", while Elizabeth Egerton counselled that a wife should love her husband as a friend.³⁸ At the heart of this type of love was chastity, mutuality, tenderness and permanence.

We should not be carried away, however, by statements about the positive nature of conjugal love. Taylor's judicious use of the word "some" should not be ignored; nor should Theodidactus' careful inclusion of "when", or his purely male perspective. Snawsel counselled that wifely love should be expressed through submissiveness and obedience.³⁹ Taylor, meanwhile, conceded that, although "a woman can love as passionately, and converse as pleasantly, and retain a secret as faithfully, and be useful in her proper ministeries", she "is not so good a counsellor as a wise man, and cannot so well defend my

³⁵ See also Alexander Nicholes *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (London 1615) in Harleian Miscellany Vol.II (London 1809) p.51

³⁶ See also Edmund Tilney *A brief and pleasant discourse of duties in Mariage, called "The Flower of Friendship"* (London 1568) transcribed in Wayne *'The Flower of Friendship'* p.110

³⁷ Taylor *Measures and Offices of Friendship* pp.80,94-95,iii

³⁸ Eugenius Theodidactus [John Heydon] *Advice to a Daughter, In Opposition to the Advice to a Son. Or Directions for your Better Conduct through the various and most important Encounters in this Life*. 2nd edn (London 1659) p.69; Devotional Pieces by Elizabeth, Countess of Bridgewater, BL Add.MS 607. f.79b

³⁹ Snawsel *Looking Glasse for Married Folkes*. p.82

honour".⁴⁰ Published male perceptions of love, therefore, were bound inextricably to received ideas on the proper, unequal relationship between the sexes and intrinsic female weakness (see chapter eight). This helps deepen our understanding of early-modern readings of love. It should not undermine our confidence in its existence.

That love was tied up with reciprocal obligation is evident in the marital conduct book writers' delineation of love as husbands' duty to which their wives should respond with respect and obedience.⁴¹ But within this framework of 'benign inequality', the books depicted marriage as a relationship predicated on companionship, affection and love. Smith appealed to husbands to treat their wives with "a holie love, with a hartie love, and with a constant love", stressing "unless there be ioning of harts, and knitting of affections together" a marriage was only so "in shew and name, and shall dwell in a house like poysons in a stomack, and one shall be sicke of the other".⁴² According to Griffith, marriage partners should have an "intyre affection to each other". Such love took on both a temporal and spiritual role. It formed a powerful antidote to lust (a "hereditary disease") and adultery, and "an excellent preservative to Gods worship".⁴³ Lovemaking of a "cheerefull" nature was "the best means to continue and nourish" a marriage and feed a "mutuall naturall love" between husband and wife".⁴⁴ However, the conduct book writers were keen that couples contained their passion. Sexual relations were a religious duty that began "in God" and was "for God".⁴⁵ Husband and wife "must not come together as brute creatures and unreasonable beasts" in "haste or desire", but "see their Maker in his ordinance, and crave his blessing solemnly as at meals".⁴⁶

40 Taylor *Measures and Offices of Friendship*. p.96

41 See Gataker *Marriage Duties Briefely Couched Together*. pp.5,6; Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. pp.62,63 [reference to Ephesians 5.25]; Griffith *Bethel*. pp.289-90 [reference to Ephesians 5.22]

42 Smith *Preparative to Mariage*. pp.64,56

43 William Gouge *Of Domesticall Duties* (London 1622; Amsterdam 1976) pp.210,221; Griffith *Bethel*. pp.288,290

44 Gouge *Domesticall Duties* p.222

45 Griffith *Bethel*. p.291

46 William Perkins 'Christian Oeconomy, or a short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering

A firm distinction was made, therefore, between chaste love and hot-blooded passion that pertained within marriage. Hieron advised husbands it was "not commendable" to love their wives with too great an ardour: "There may be dotage at home, as well as adulterie abroad". He championed a love that grew over time, since it was "the glory of marriage when there is both a continuance and a growth of love, so that the last parting affecteth, with greater griefe, then the first meeting satisfied with content".⁴⁷ From Hieron's structuring his treatise around how a young man should "chuse his love" and "love his choice" it can be inferred that he thought it acceptable for young men to select their own mate (primarily on the basis of the relative "inward goodness" of women) and that he saw love as a marital obligation.⁴⁸ Once a wife was secured, she should be loved. As a precursor, a wife had to be worthy of enjoying that love. Theodidactus contemplated whether "likeness is the cause of love, or love the cause of likeness". He concluded the former was "easier", the latter "more worthy".⁴⁹

Emergent views

The conduct book writers' perceptions of love, based essentially on patriarchy, related strongly to their views on the proper management of the household and the importance of establishing and maintaining familial hierarchies. Love could ensure the efficient running of the household. Its antithesis - warring or straying husbands and wives - threatened the stability of the domestic sphere, other families, and the wider community. Conjugal love was also a religious duty. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was a hostility to love of too passionate a hue, even within marriage. Sound marital love was believed to be

a family, according to the scriptures' in I. Breward (ed.) *The Work of William Perkins* Vol.II (Abingdon 1970) p.424 [reference to Hebrews 13.4 & I Timothy 4.3-4]; Whately *Bride-Bush* p.43

⁴⁷ Simon Hieron *The Bridegroom* (London 1613) pp.19-20

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.8ff, see also Leigh *Mothers Blessing*. p.52

⁴⁹ Theodidactus *Advice to a Daughter*. p.74

based on mutuality, friendship and a common godly worship and an upholder of the sexual hierarchy.

Contemporary writers' acute awareness of acceptable and unacceptable versions of love cannot be divorced from their pragmatic anxiety to contain sexuality and avoid the social disruption caused by adultery, fornication and illegitimate children. But this approach does not negate the faith or importance attached to love. George and George's suggestion that English Protestants were only concerned with sexual activity and its repercussions outside marriage is too simplistic.⁵⁰ A distinction between chaste love based firmly on a love of God and sense of social responsibility (*agape*), and a love that was rooted precariously in lust (*eros*), derived from more than just a fear of instability and immorality. This further reinforces the unhelpfulness of equating conjugal love with sexual activity and the need to explore the subtle nuances of perception and attitude that emerge through more personal writings. It is these that the next chapter considers.

⁵⁰ C.H. George & K. George *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640* (Princeton 1961) p.272

Chapter ten

Personal perceptions, attitudes and experience: love in marriage formation and marriage

From rhetoric to lived emotion

Moving on from considering the views that emerge from printed material, this chapter explores individuals' beliefs and attitudes about love and their related experiences. It is difficult to gauge how far published literature influenced individuals and *vice versa*.¹ But contemporaneous letters and personal memoirs suggest perceptions and attitudes that had strong parallels with those outlined in chapter nine. Again, individuals were keen to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable love, while a strong sense is gained of the importance of conjugal love, although not 'romantic love'. This belies any notion that affection was foreign to marriage formation and marital relationships for the early-modern social elite.

To study past feelings of love is essentially to study how individuals used language, constructed their lives in writing and communicated with one another through the written word. Nonetheless, this recording process is illuminating. Surviving documents were not passive providers of information. Love letters, in particular, formed an active ingredient in relationships. They were not just - or necessarily - a secondary or inferior form of communication in times of separation, but likely to have fuelled feelings of love, provided a permanent memento of the depth of emotion felt by their senders and acted as a potent agent in courtship and marriage.² This is amply illustrated by Herbert Aston and

¹ See H. Dubrow *A Happier Eden: The Politics of Marriage in the Stuart Epithalamium* (Ithaca 1990) p.11 for a critique of assumptions that theoretical treatises influenced and reflected actual behaviour and attitudes

² See E. Gosse *The Life and Letters of John Donne* Vol.I (London 1899) pp.122-23; Donne's verse letter 'To Sir Henry Wotton' in A.J. Smith (ed.) *John Donne - The Complete English Poems* (London 1971) p.214; James Howell *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae: Familiar Letters Domestic and Foreign; divided into four books: partly historical, political, philosophical. Upon Emergent Occasions* 11th edn (London 1754) p.13

Katherine Thimelby's correspondence (see chapter six), letters to Elizabeth Hawley that Leonard Wheatcroft transcribed in his courtship narrative, and Lady Elizabeth Delaval's proud boast that Lord Anesley, during their doomed courtship, let "no day pass[ed] in which he did not write to me", despite his also being "continually at my elbow".³ Thomas Blount advised 'all noble gentlemen and ladies of England' that "An amorous Letter to a youthful heart, is a learned enchantment"; there was "no force more powerfull ... to batter a minde".⁴ Recording feelings and experiences of love in letters or personal memoirs is likely to have crystallised them in the minds of their authors. Surviving documents are thus more than a weak hint of emotions from an irretrievable world. They developed and sustained feelings and relationships.

Love in marriage formation

Sir John Oglander counselled his eldest son, George, that "raving beauty" should not "blind" his "better judgment as to cause you by too late repentance to reap the fruits of your own folly" and reminded him, on a "happy marriage[,] depends your own good and the welfare of your brothers and sisters".⁵ The young man thus had both his own self-interest and the well-being of his siblings to consider. Sir John seems to have been willing to give George the freedom to choose whom he married, providing he considered pragmatic and familial factors and was not driven by lust. Some parents were more explicitly sympathetic to love's forming the basis for marriage, at least when practical details made a match acceptable. Sir Robert Eyton was won over to his son, also Robert, marrying Sir John Oglander's daughter, Bridget, because of "The boundless love of my son for your sweet daughter". He used this to persuade Sir John of the wisdom of the match;

³ G. Parfitt & R. Houlbrooke (eds.) *The Courtship Narrative of Leonard Wheatcroft, Derbyshire Yeoman* (Reading 1986); 'The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval' in C.F. Otten (ed.) *English Women's Voices, 1540-1700* (Miami 1992) p.337

⁴ Thomas Blount *The Academy of Eloquence* (London 1654; Menston 1971) p.76

⁵ Letter from Sir John Oglander to George Oglander, 7 March 1631 in C. Aspinall-Oglander *Numwell Symphony* (London, 1945) p.77

the couple's affection "forceth my demands for her portion to a small sum, which is but £200". This had reciprocal benefits, allowing Sir Robert to offer a jointure at an amount "as your portion requireth".⁶ Within negotiations, therefore, affection could form a useful substitute for a more generous settlement.

Individuals writing for ostensibly private purposes ruminated on the more personal implications of love. Encouraging her cousin Sir Robert Harley in his alleged courtship, Mary Fane reflected, "men in love are always held not to be their owne men". She was perhaps alluding to the notion that love eroded men's self-control and rationality (see chapter three), or to a sense of women's empowerment - at least in emotional terms - over their suitors. The latter seems more likely. Mary went on to state, "if you be not your owne I would I knew whoe you are that I might let them know how much I am thers", indicating her keenness to make links with her cousin's prospective wife.⁷ (Sir Robert married Brilliana Conway shortly after the letter was written.)

The case of Dr. John Worthington and Mary Whichcote shows how relatively independent courtship and parental involvement in marriage formation could coalesce. Dr. Worthington, master of Jesus College, Cambridge and subsequently vice-chancellor of the university, recorded in his diary on 3rd August 1657 that he had begun "to speak with Mrs. M[ary] W[hichote]" on the matter of their marrying. That he used only her initials is no doubt telling of his wish to protect her identity from any prying eyes. As affection between the couple grew, a strong relationship developed between Dr. Worthington and his future father-in-law. Christopher Whichcote, a merchant, was concerned to serve Dr. Worthington by preparing for the wedding efficiently and to his liking. Enclosing a letter

⁶ Letter from Sir Robert Eyton to Sir John Oglander, 15 January 1649 in Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell Symphony*. p.114

⁷ Letter from Mary Fane to Sir Robert Harley, 9 July 1623 in Harley Letters and Papers (Vol.I) HMC 14th Report, Appendix, Part II: *The Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Portland, presented at Welbeck Abbey* Vol.III (London 1894) p.12; see C. Bates *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature* (Cambridge 1992) p.19

from Mary, Mr. Whichcote explained it provided a "grave account of my daughter Mary her affections, & respect to you" and informed Dr. Worthington that his letter to Mary a week before, had given "her spirits a new life".⁸

Mr. Whichcote therefore used evidence of Mary's love to convince Dr. Worthington of his wisdom in intending to marry her. His covering letters suggest that the real negotiations occurred between the two men; Mary's words simply provided affirmation of the appropriateness of what the men planned. But the language used by Dr. Worthington and Mary Whichcote also shows the strength of affection they felt for one another. Although Mary was likely to have been considerably younger than her suitor (Dr. Worthington was forty at the time of their marriage preparations), they shared a mutual respect and love, together with a sense of loss during periods of separation. The purpose of one of Dr. Worthington's letters was "to present my most real & dear affections". Having left the household of Mary's father the week before, he was comforted by "the constant remembrance of your loves & sweetnees, and all those your lovely & endearing perfections, both of body & minde, disposition, & deportment, not forgetting your musick". He looked forward to "that happy time of enjoying your ever desired company, & the crowning of your affections".⁹ In response, Mary declared his letter to be more welcome to her than "nothing but yourself could have been". His declarations of "a great deal of love to me" led her to confess the "moving of my heart" and to state, "of all the men that I ever saw, I were to chuse of ten thousand, my heart would not close of any, as with yourself". Dr. Worthington's virtue lay in his "knowledge, goodness, & [a] loving disposition". In Mary's eyes, "no person [was] so desirable".¹⁰

⁸ J. Crossley (ed.) *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge*. Chetham Society Vol. 13 (1847) p. 87

⁹ Ibid. p. 86

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 88

Their courtship shows that matches based solidly on love could be supported and encouraged by significant family members. We gain no impression of whether there was any additional family involvement on Dr. Worthington's side. His age and the nature of his letters suggest he acted autonomously. In this sense, the match forms an example of a mixed approach to matchmaking.¹¹ Other matches based on love were viewed far less sympathetically, at least when they broke established custom and threatened family interests. The poet and cleric John Donne was thrown into gaol by his outraged father-in-law, Sir George More, when he married Anne More in a clandestine ceremony, charged with breaking both the Common and Canon law. His defence - that he and Anne had acted out of love, with "honest purposes in our hearts", and because Sir George would not have accepted him as a husband for Anne because his "present estate [was] less then fit for her" - did nothing to improve the situation. Only a legal decision on the marriage's validity and intervention from Anne's wider family rescued the couple. However, Sir George withheld his daughter's portion, making the couple dependent on more distant kin for support (showing the significant role of the extended family; see chapter two).¹²

Although Leonard Wheatcroft encountered problems of a lesser kind when he tried to marry Elizabeth Hawley, the obstacles posed by his future father-in-law led to a protracted two-year courtship. Facing objections to his financial status, Leonard resorted to writing Elizabeth verse. He sought to persuade her they should marry regardless of the precise terms of a marriage agreement because he could muster the basics for their life together:

A house I have and furniture,

And all to pleasure thee, my dear,

¹¹ Negotiations between Lady Jane Cornwallis and Nathaniel Bacon and his family provides an example 'in reverse'; see chapter four

¹² Gosse *The Life and Letters of John Donne*. Vol.1 pp.95-121 passim

And I have land for thee to view,

Is worth five hundred pounds a year.

What needest thou to fear, my joy and dear?

There's nothing wanting...¹³

Wheatcroft's lines indicate his acute sense of the intertwining of the practicalities of life with heartfelt emotion (see chapter nine). His persistence with Elizabeth's family, and with the young woman herself, finally paid off. The couple married in May 1657. The Duke and Duchess of Newcastle were of a very different social standing, but their courtship shows a similar elision of love and practical concerns. Margaret Cavendish wrote of her future husband's taking "more than an ordinary affection for me", motivated by his desire both to "increase his posterity by a masculine offspring" (by adding to the two sons he already had from his first marriage) and strong feelings for her. That Margaret proved "barren ... did never lessen his love and affection for me".¹⁴

Some young people devised devious means to advance illicit courtships. Anne Murray (later Lady Anne Halkett) took a literal approach to her mother's proscribing her from seeing Thomas Howard, blindfolding herself to "secure mee from seeing him, and so I did not transgresse against my mother".¹⁵ Mary Boyle, subsequently the Countess of Warwick, received the attentions of Robert Rich under the deceit he was visiting her sister-in-law, Elizabeth. Their courtship blossomed over several months, "in which time, by his more than ordinary humble behaviour to me, he did insensibly steal away my heart, and got a greater possession of it than I knew he had".¹⁶ Only after Mary contracted

¹³ Parfitt & Houlbrooke *Courtship Narrative of Leonard Wheatcroft*. p.59

¹⁴ C.H. Firth (ed.) *Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. The Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle (1667)* (London 1886) pp.87-88

¹⁵ J.G. Nichols (ed.) *Lady Anne Halkett's Autobiography* Camden Society, Vol.XIII (London 1875)

p.12

¹⁶ T. Crofton Croker (ed.) *Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick* (London 1848) p.7

measles and was separated from Elizabeth did the real situation become apparent. Mr. Rich's attentions, while fuelling Mary's affections for him, made her family and friends realise, "he had for me, and I for him a respect which they feared was too far gone" (much to their disappointment).¹⁷

Lady Anne Halkett's autobiography offers valuable insights into the machinations of courtship. At least with the benefit of hindsight, she stressed love had not clouded her mind to more practical considerations or the respect she owed her widowed mother. Thomas Howard employed drastic tactics to woo her, declaring he would flee the country to "a convent", thereby putting "him selfe outt of capacity of marrying any other", if she refused his hand. He surmised his providing "a wedding ring and a minister to marry us" should be sufficient inducement. Anne, however, "was much unsatisfied with his going to that length, and, in short, told him that hee need never expect I would marry him without his father and my mother's consent". If this was secured, she would "willingly give him the sattisfaction hee desired".¹⁸ On hearing about the relationship, Anne's mother and Lord Howard were "passionately offended", the former partly because she had expressly forbid Anne to have "a thought of allowing such an adrese".¹⁹ Thomas's regret that Anne should suffer the wrath of her mother seems to have melted her heart:

... laing aside all former distance I had kept him att, I sat downe upon his knee, and laying my head neare his I suffred him to kisse me, w[hi]ch was a liberty I never gave before.²⁰

Nevertheless, she maintained her resolve not to marry without her mother's consent, believing such behaviour to be "the highest ingratitude and disobedience that children could committ" (see chapter eight). The courtship was terminated and Thomas Howard diverted his 'insubordinate' affections to another, making a secret match with Lady

17 Ibid. p.9

18 Ibid. p.13

19 Ibid. p.7

20 Ibid. p.8

Elizabeth Mordaunt, daughter of the Earl of Peterborough, again contrary to the wishes of both families.²¹ Some young people, it seems, were serial flouters of parental control.

There was a belief that young adults who acted wilfully in love did so because they had been raised badly (see chapter five). Blame was therefore deflected to their parents or guardians. Sir John Oglander reported disapprovingly of Bridget Lisle, daughter of Sir William, explaining she was "A rude girl and ill brought up, her parents letting her have her way in all things". He found it unsurprising, therefore, that she had run "away with one Mr Jennings, an ironmonger's second son", a young man who was doubtless regarded as doubly unsuitable given his social standing and place in his sibling hierarchy.²²

Although Sir John Oglander was keen to see a balance between personal happiness and the careful custody of family interests in the marriages of his own children, he lamented an apparent shift in balance between the relative power held by love and families' financial concerns within attitudes towards marriage. Retelling the life of his father, he reported that Sir William Oglander "fell in love" with Ann Dillington, "as handsome a maiden as any as was in Hampshire". Sir William's uncle had intervened to break off the match, wishing to marry him off more lucratively to his own daughter. However, Sir William, "being in love, would not hearken unto it", incurring the wrath of both his aunt and uncle to the extent he was disinherited. Sentiment triumphed over money, however; Sir William married Anne, despite the fact that she "had not with her above £50". Sir John reflected, "in those times [probably the 1560s or 1570s] men married for love [more] than money".²³

²¹ Ibid. pp.13,18

²² F. Bamford (ed.) *A Royalist's Notebook: The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander Kt. of Nunwell* (London 1936) pp.171-72; see letter from Lettice Nicoll to her father, 16th January 16(-) BL Add. MS 34,769 regarding news that her Aunt Haydon was due to marry "gentell man, that is much in debt and inclining to papistrie", all the more serious "when shee hath soe much in her youth"

²³ Bamford *Royalist's Notebook* pp.171-72

This anecdote is interesting. Sir John Oglander was not harking back to a more sentimental approach to marriage formation on the part of those in the position to consent or proscribe. Rather, he seems simply to have applauded a greater readiness on the part of his father's generation to rebel against the wishes of their family. The extent to which there was such a change and, if so, reasons for this were, are unclear. Such a trend is the reverse of that defined by the much-questioned paradigm of Stone, while Houlbrooke has suggested that love increased in importance during the period. More cautiously, Ingram has concluded there is "no positive evidence of any substantial shift" in the grounds upon which marriages were forged between 1400 and 1700.²⁴ Although this appears the case, it is difficult to detect any firm trends from surviving remnants of individuals' lives. However, possible shifts of nuance can be detected, at least in how writers expressed themselves (see chapter seven).

Some writers recorded the more amorous elements of their courtships. Captain Henry Sibthorpe expressed frustration with having to wait to marry, confessing to Lady Anne Southwell his reliance on "patience" until "fate shall all the putt-betweenes remove then shall our deedes fulfill the face of love".²⁵ Roger Lowe recorded proudly the first time he stayed up all night wooing, while Margaret Cavendish's courtship letters highlight the difficult balance to be struck between showing sufficient affection so as not to lose her suitor's interest and not overstepping the accepted bounds of propriety for an unmarried woman.²⁶ Evidently fearful William Cavendish would infer from her weakness of expression a tepidness in the love she actually felt for him, Margaret explained, "it is as

²⁴ L. Stone *The Family, Sex and Marriage 1500-700* (London 1977); M. Ingram 'The Reform of Popular Culture? Sex and Marriage in Early Modern England' in B. Reay (ed.) *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*. (London 1988) p.137; Houlbrooke *The English Family* p.105

²⁵ Klene *Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*. pp.43-44

²⁶ W.L. Sachse (ed.) *The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire 1663-74* (London 1938) p.12; R.W. Goulding (ed.) *Letters from the Originals at Welbeck Abbey* (London 1909) p.7

uncomble to see a woman to kained as to a man to [be] necklegant".²⁷ Her inhibitions apparently left her temporarily, and she hastily sought to make amends:

I am a lettell ashamed of my last leter, more then of the others, not that my affection can be to larg, but I fear that I discover it to much in that leter, for wemen must love silently, but I hop you will pardon the [letter] still, becaus the intention was good.²⁸

She assured Cavendish she was "not esly drawn to be in love", and had never before seen "any man but yourself that I could have married".²⁹ She felt the need to lessen the ardour of his love, reminding him, "it is not true love that absence or tim can demenesh" and "ther is customeare law that must be sineed before I may lawfully call you husban". She was concerned his love might only be fleeting, given its ferocity, and dared "not belefe" he could be "so pashonit" as he claimed, since "it may be feared it cannot last long, for no extrem is permanenttany".³⁰ Again, this reveals a mistrust of lustful or impulsive love - it was not 'proper' and did not bode well for happy matrimony - that was in keeping with the views espoused in the marital conduct books (see chapters eight and nine).³¹ Matched against this was a confidence that "Time and absence may coole the violentest affection" when it was inappropriate.³²

Love within marriage

In addition to expressing somewhat ambiguous views on love as a precursor to marriage, Sir John Oglander championed love within the institution, offering the counsel, "Live lovingly with thy wife" and "thou mayest be as happy and enjoy as much content as it is possible for mortals". If a man had a wife, "he needest no other company than her and

27 Goulding *Letters from the Originals*. p.7

28 Ibid. p.11

29 Ibid. p.13

30 Ibid. p.14

31 See Klene *Sibthorpe-Southwell Commonplace Book*. p.79

32 Letter from Sir Edmund Verney to his son Ralph, 7th April 1639 in J. Bruce (ed.) *Letters and Papers of the Verney Family Down to the End of the Year 1639* Camden Society (London 1853) p.215

thy children". These maxims were based on Sir John's personal experience of living with his wife "for the space of 15 years (had it not been interlaced with sickness) as happily for our estate, as well and plentifully and in as good repute and fashion as any could, or would, desire".³³

Recounting the marriage of his parents, Oliver Heywood claimed, "when the lord had thus betrothed and maryed my dear mother to himselfe in righteous judgement loving-kindnes and merys, he provided for her a suitable husband".³⁴ This linking of an actual marriage with a metaphorical holy one mirrors the advice of Henry Smith.³⁵ Whether it formed an embellishment on Heywood's part, or a faithful account of how his mother retold the circumstances of her marital union, it shows love was perceived overtly by some as resting on divine sanction, as well as approval from parents or other senior family members. Heywood's declaration of his own love for his future wife, Elizabeth Angier, played upon his confidence that his advances had received godly approval, as well as highlighting his sense of the importance of he and Elizabeth entering marriage with reciprocal affection:

... but sweet Mrs. Betty as I have given my Heart to You, You ought in return to give me Yours, and You cannot in Equity deny it me. I have been very urgent at the Throne of Grace, and that which is won by Prayer, may be worn with praise ...³⁶

Heywood reflected that his attachment to Elizabeth had formed "many invincible bands of cordial love, both natural, mortal and spiritual".³⁷ Less happily, the Countess of Cumberland explained that her youthful love for George Clifford had been founded on base interest, rather than a love deriving from spirituality or "honour":

33 Bamford *Royalist's Notebook*. p.5

34 J.H. Turner (ed.) *The Rev. Oliver Heywood, BA, 1630-1702. His Autobiography, Diaries, Anecdote and Event Books* Vol.I (Brighouse 1882) p.44

35 Henry Smith *A Preparative to Mariage* (London 1591; Amsterdam 1975) pp.50-51

36 Undated letter from Oliver Heywood to Elizabeth Angier in Turner *Rev. Oliver Heywood*. Vol.I p.132

37 Ibid. p.170

My mind not foreseeing my one good, was not desirous I thought honour good, so rather going on the ground of common good than any particular liking, which by chance met with the like mind in him ...³⁸

While it is important to distinguish between love and sexual relations, the latter were seen as a vital element within marriage (see chapters eight and nine). Gervase Holles reflected that "contentment in my bed" had compensated for financial problems he had suffered.³⁹ He also reported having delayed consummating his marriage because of the youth of his bride.⁴⁰ A number of writers stressed their love for their partner, either before or after marriage, had been chaste. As a widow, Lucy Hutchinson vouched for the intensity and purity of her husband's love: "never had a man had a greater passion for a woman, yet he was never uxorious" and his "constant indulgence" exceeded "the common temporary passions of the most uxorious fools".⁴¹ Shortly after their marriage, Joan Thynne chastised her husband for writing to her of his "zealous love". Seemingly mindful of the dangers of such impetuous emotion, she went on, "I persuade myself your love is worth as good affection towards me as mine is to you, which is as much as I desire".⁴² John Drury, writing to an unnamed friend of his future wife, Lady Ranelagh, stressed that his wish to marry was guided by God, not by "worldly", "earthly" or "personall passion". However, he could not "denie the affections of humanitie" that had also "sway[ed]" and led him in his planned course of action.⁴³ More retrospectively, Lady Anne Halkett suspected regretfully that her courtships with Thomas Howard and the Colonel Banfield

³⁸ Letter from the Countess of Cumberland to Dr. Layfield [undated] in G.C. Williamson *George, Third Earl of Cumberland (1558-1605). His Life and Voyages* (Cambridge 1920) p.286

³⁹ A.C. Wood (ed.) *Memorials of the Holles Family, 1493-1656* Camden Third Series Vol.IV (London 1937) p.229

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.229; see F.J. Furnivall *Child-Marriages, Divorces and Ratifications, sic in the Diocese of Chester, 1561-6* (London 1897) p.xxxi

⁴¹ Lucy Hutchinson *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, Governor of Nottingham Castle and Town ... Written by his Widow Lucy* (London 1806) p.12

⁴² Letter from Joan Thynne to John Thynne (1576) in A. Wall (ed.) *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575-1611* Wiltshire Record Society Vol.XXXVIII (Devizes 1983) p.3

⁴³ *Begin, Madam, Although my forder freedom, etc.* [Four letters to Lady Ranelagh, the first, third and fourth by John Drury, the second by his wife, concerning their marriage] (1645) BL Thomson Tracts Vol.E.288.(14), Letter 1, pp.4-5

(which she described as "the greatest of afflictions") had secured her a reputation as being "too easily prevailed with".⁴⁴

Sir Roger Twysden and Oliver Heywood each thought the love of their respective late wives had been too strong: if Isabella Twysden had a "fault", it was that "she was too fond" of her husband, while if Elizabeth Heywood "offended in any way[,] it was through vehemency of affection".⁴⁵ It is difficult to glean the writers' precise meaning. Possibly they felt their wives' love somehow exceeded 'acceptable norms' (perhaps those prescribed by contemporary advice literature); may be they felt it detracted from the love they should have had for God; or may be they felt it presented practical difficulties (perhaps their wives' ability to cope during enforced periods of separation). Nevertheless, these personal reflections show a strong sense of there being boundaries, both within and before marriage, that feelings and expressions of love should not overstep.

While there is ample testament by individuals to their experiences of strong love, not all perceived or experienced the emotion so intensely. Sir John Oglander's sister, Amy, reflecting on the circumstances surrounding her second marriage, confessed that her "other husband was more kind, loving, and indulgent to me than this one ever has or will be". However, she recognised that her duty according to the teaching of St. Paul was "to be content" in whatever situation she found herself. The passive way in which she developed a supposed affection for Mr. Button, and her faith in her brother knowing what was best for her, is striking:

I confess I did not like Mr. Button when I first saw him, but your highly extolling him made me love him, for upon my faith I would have married no man living without your approbation and good counsel; and if you pleased in a new brother I am pleased in a husband.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Nichols *Autobiography of Lady Anne Halkett*. pp.35,26

⁴⁵ Sir Robert Twysden's journal in *Archaeologia Cantiana. Transactions of the Kent Archaeological Society* Vol.I (1858) p.200; Turner Rev. *Oliver Heywood*. p.62

⁴⁶ Letter from Amy Button to Sir John Oglander, dated 11 March 1632, in Aspinall-Oglander *Nunwell*

Amy's apparent love for Mr. Button seems to have derived wholly from a sense of obligation to her brother and as a naturall corollary of her marital state. This seems in keeping with the logic presented by Hieron (albeit to young gentlemen) and with the more abstract notion of 'pathological love' described by Kant (see chapter nine).

But the Aston and Barrington family papers reveal the deep affection that could exist between marriage partners. Most striking is the relationship between Katherine and Herbert Aston, whose intense courtship was considered in chapter six.⁴⁷ As a wife, Katherine continued to write letters filled with strong declarations of love. She suspected Herbert might feel embarrassed by these and stated, "I know you hate this letter but I cannot help writing it [;] if you would burne it you would sure forget what you think foolish".⁴⁸ Nevertheless, she was concerned her letters might fail to convey the depth of her emotion. She gained assurance, however, that Herbert could infer her true meaning:

... my letters to you and the expression of my thoughts are vowd to be unseparable, and tho I doe not speke them fully your perfect love will reade out of my characters such a one which the les knowing could not perceave by them.⁴⁹

The impression is gained that Katherine's happiness during her husband's absences was utterly dependent on her receiving letters from him. Writing shortly after the receipt of one missive, she stated, it was "so long and kind, it might have made me a leter for everyone of those days I sofered so much by the want of it". However, even correspondence was not sufficient to maintain her well-being. Although she knew Herbert's letters were an attempt to raise her spirits, she lamented, "nothing can efect it but your presence" and pledged she would not allow him to be apart from her again. She claimed her physical health deteriorated in his absence in addition to her emotional

Symphony. p.80; see also Mary Heydon's letter to her brother William Moseley, 20th November - BL Add. MS 34,769 f.3 for a similarly pragmatic approach to marriage

⁴⁷ See also correspondence between the Viscount and Viscountess Conway, BL Add. MS 23,215 for a similarly intense relationship

⁴⁸ Letter from Katherine Aston to Herbert Aston [undated] BL Add.Mss.36,452, f.37

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* f.37

health; she suffered "fits of daseling", but felt confident her eyes "shall be perfect well when you give them the perfect hapines of your sight".⁵⁰

As Katherine Aston's letters to her husband are undated, it is impossible to gauge how long the couple had been married when she wrote them. However, a letter from Katherine to Sir William Persall (married to Herbert's sister, Frances) contains a postscript, reminding him that St. Simeon and Jude's day, which had recently passed, had been the sixteenth anniversary of her marriage to Herbert - "the happiest married state".⁵¹ It can perhaps safely be inferred, then, that Katherine's affection for her husband lasted throughout their marriage. Herbert's intense bereavement following Katherine's death in 1658 is testament to its being reciprocated. He wrote two pieces in her honour, a poem, *Aspirations sent after Seraphine in glory by her distressed supplyant* (Seraphina being his pet name for her), and an account of the final days of her life, "w[i]th some general reflections on ye vertues & suffrings of her precedent life". In the latter, he stressed Katherine's courage in suffering "the greatest extremity possible both of sickness and paine" and her religiosity, producing in her a "violent aversion, and iust sadnes at the vaine amusements and seduced condition of most of the world". In his poem to her, he wrote, "you did alone dispence / All joys I had, and every hope from thence".⁵²

Letters written to Herbert Aston following Katherine's death suggest he was inconsolable. His sister, Constance Fowler, urged him to end his solitary grieving and "seeke some diversion from your too deepe sad thoughts". Walter, the second Lord Aston, conceded Herbert's loss was "as greate as can be", that his love for Katherine had

50 Ibid. f.40

51 Letter in A. Clifford (ed.) *Tixall Letters: or the Correspondence of the Aston Family and their Friends during the Seventeenth Century* (London 1815) p.166

52 'A perticular accompt of ye most remarkable passages at ye happy end of Mrs. Ca. Aston & wt past 7 dayes before wth some general reflections on ye vertues & suffrings of her precedent life' [1658] BL Add.MS 36,452, f.56; Clifford *Tixall Letters*. p.204; see L.B. Osborn (ed.) *The Life, Letters and Writings of John Hoskyns, 1566-1638* (New Haven 1937) passim for insights into a more tempestuous, though still intense, marriage

"exceed[ed] all others in passyon", and that her virtue had surpassed all "in merritt". But he implored his brother to rejoin the "company and soceyty" of the family and tried to add weight to the plea by persuading his daughter Eliza Southcott to write to her uncle. In her letter, she reminded Herbert of his wife's "prayer and desire" to die before him and reasoned he should not frustrate Katherine's wish by dying with her.⁵³

The depth of Lady Joan Barrington's affection for her husband, Sir Francis, is revealed by her accompanying him to prison in Marshalsea in 1626, following his refusal to contribute to a loan called from Members of Parliament by Charles I. The act of rebellion formed part of a wider determination against the Crown's encroachment on Parliament's powers and privileges to raise money. (Sir William Masham, Sir Francis and Lady Joan's son-in-law, was also imprisoned for his refusal to contribute to the loan.)⁵⁴ Ezekiel Rogers had initially been surprised by Lady Joan's voluntary imprisonment and had been forced to question whether she was wishing to "affect the honour of martyrdom". On reflection, however, he recognised that for her to be parted from her husband would form a worse punishment than imprisonment. Rogers applauded his mistress's action, interpreting it as an assertion of her wifely love and duty:

... by yo[u]r practice you seeme to me as one resolved to have saide to yo[u]r deere Companion Intreate me not to leave thee nor depart from thee, for whither thou goest, I will goe; & where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shalbe my people; & thy God my God; Where thou diest, I will dy; & nothing but death shall depart thee & me. This was the speech of that vertuous Ruth, & it seemes it is ye speech & practice of you.⁵⁵

Rogers was echoing the tenets of the marital conduct books in advocating such complete wifely subordination to her husband and supporting this by scriptural references (see chapter eight). Direct evidence does not exist to substantiate Rogers' interpretation of Lady Joan Barrington's action. However, it seems reasonable to infer

53 *Clifford Tixall Letters*. pp.171-76

54 *Lowndes History of the Barrington Family*. pp.22-23

55 Letter from Ezekiel Rogers to Lady Joan Barrington, 18th April 1627 BL Egerton MS 2644, f.251

from her action that she could not tolerate indefinite separation from her husband. In fact, Lady Joan and her husband were released from prison in 1627, following Sir Francis' petitions to Charles I and the Privy Council for release on the grounds of ill health. Sir Francis died a year later.

Letters from other members of the Barrington family to Lady Joan indicate their love for their respective marriage partners. Richard Whalley, husband of Joan's sister Frances, was inspired to reflect on his wife's patience with his "Infirmityes" and her cherishing of his "weaknes". He contemplated the success of their marriage as he sensed its curtailment by his own death.⁵⁶ Jane Hook, daughter of Richard and Frances, considered at an early point in her marriage her fortune in having such a caring and loving husband. She had viewed her uncle, Sir Francis Barrington, as the paragon of husbandly virtue, and had supposed she could never have a man of comparable qualities for herself. But she gave thanks that, in Mr. Hook, God had "dealt with me very graciously" in giving her "a helpe both for my soule and body". She expressed her hope that her "cosen Joan Mewix hath no worse yokefellow then god has given me", and reflected upon aunt's great joy once she had both a niece and grand-daughter "so happily bestode" (see chapter six).⁵⁷

A letter from Walter, the second Lord Aston, to his wife, Lady Mary, forms a contemplation on their marriage of sixteen-and-a-half years' standing. It contains no news *per se*, but simply conveys his thoughts on the success of their life together. They had "a mutuall love[,] nay each off us a more pertyculer affectyon each to other now[,] then when we First promysed it to each other". Despite having "undergone some diffycultyes" (unspecified), their relationship had endured and their needs met by God. Indeed, Lord Aston suggested that, rather than misfortune having "lessened our affectyons", it had

⁵⁶ Letter from Richard Whalley to Lady Joan Barrington, 22 July 1628 BL Egerton MS 2644, f.275

⁵⁷ Letter from Jane Hook to Lady Joan Barrington, 28 December [1630] BL Egerton MS 2645, f.112

"increased them". In respect of Mary, he stated simply, "you are a good wife[,] a carefull loving mother". He pledged to try to continue "to prove a loving husband to deserve this y[ou]r affectyon and care".⁵⁸

Attitudes towards extra-marital love could be ambivalent. Having been coerced into a "very disagreeable" marriage with "a very sickly young man", Elizabeth Delavel took pleasure from the attentions of the Earl of Rutland. She reasoned that, as he had "never spoke to me of love at all" before she had married Robert Delavel, she "cou'd not but live friendly with him and receive his visits as I used to do".⁵⁹ Lady Anne Newdigate seems not to have passed judgement over the amorous antics of her sister Mary Fitton at court, although the latter did finally cause family outrage when she became pregnant by the Earl of Pembroke.⁶⁰ An earlier suitor to Mary, the married Sir William Knollys, used her sister as his confidant, expressing his love sickness in numerous letters. Lady Anne effectively reciprocated by inviting him to become her son's godfather.⁶¹ Colonel Marten, a radical parliamentarian associated with the levellers, openly lived with his mistress, Mary Ward, while his wife was still living. His editor, Edmund Gayton, stated coyly, "In what condition you were, when these [letters] were surpriz'd, I am not willing to relate" and chastised Mary for her behaviour:

Really, Madam, had you bin a wife, these Familiarities might very well becom you, but being (*quod dicere nolo*) it does too much shew, that lawful beds are not so highly courted as these: the use where of will cost a grand Repentance.⁶²

⁵⁸ Letter from Walter, Second Lord Aston to his wife Lady Mary, undated [1645/46?] BL Add.MS 36,452 f.115

⁵⁹ H.H.E. Craster 'Notes from a Delavel Diary' *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*. Vol.I, 3rd series 18 (1904) p.152

⁶⁰ D. Nutt (ed.) *Gossip from a Muniment Room, being Passages in the Lives of Anne and Mary Fitton, 1574 to 1618* 2nd edn (London 1898) pp.42-45

⁶¹ Ibid. p.21

⁶² E. Gayton *Col. Henry Marten's Familiar Letters to his Lady of Delight* (London 1662) Preface 'To the Delicate and male-centred Lady Mary Ward, alias Marten'; see C. Durston *The Family in the English Revolution* (Oxford 1989) p.150

Gayton also spelled out the financial cost of Colonel Marten's "sport", his having sunk "from an estate of 3 or 4000l. per ann. ... to Twelve-pece exigencies". It is ironic, however, that the colonel's letters to Mary Ward reveal a strong concern with domestic issues and the well-being of their children.⁶³ Indeed, his love seems to have adhered to the advice of the marital conduct book writers, even though his life-style appeared in direct opposition (see chapter eight).

The language of love and the influence of literature

A strong belief emerges in the power of language to woo others. Rowland Whyte advised Sir Robert Sidney, "Ladies, you know, doe love protestacions and compliments".⁶⁴ Montaigne had confidence in artistic literature's ability to incite passion, claiming "whoever would deprive Love of the use and service of poetry would weaken him in his best weapons" and expressing cynicism about the attraction of love: without the gloss of poetry, "Venus in person is not so lovely, all naked and palpitating". Poetry and facility of language - "her wares" - made love more attractive, disguising the ultimate fact that it was "all but pigs flesh".⁶⁵ Sir John Oglander humorously reflected,

After long experience and much acquaintance that I have had amongst ladies and gentlewomen, I confidently aver there is not a woman living but may be obtained and gotten by way of matrimony, if the man hath brains and will seek the means.

Thus, even women who "have hated men more than deformed beasts" could be won over "almost by any man" with sufficiently dexterous use of language. Thus, "no man" should "ever ... despair" about gaining a wife.⁶⁶ By the end of the century, Mary Astell warned women about the duplicity of smooth-talking men. Once a man's "violent Love and

⁶³ Gayton. *Col. Henry Marten's Familiar Letters*. passim

⁶⁴ Letter from Rowland Whyte to Sir Robert Sidney, 25 September 1595 in C.L. Kingsford (ed.) *Report of the Manuscripts of Lord de L'Isle and Dudley*. Vol.III HMC (London 1934) p.163

⁶⁵ Michel de Montaigne *Surs de Vers de Virgil* trans. C.V. Norman (Florence 1930) pp.18-20,48

⁶⁶ Sir John Oglander 'Observations' in Bamford *Royalist's Notebook* pp.69-71

Courtship" were "put into Sense and rendered Intelligible", they amounted to nothing but deceit.⁶⁷ Sir John Oglander's optimism about women's gullibility was also challenged by some widows. With the significant bolster of financial independence, they could be immune to amorous language and pressure to remarry. Katherine Austen did not "give Credit to wordes". While she would "doe noe Injury to none by not loveing", she felt that she "may doe real Injuries where I am already engaidged [...] To my deceased friendes posterity".⁶⁸ She therefore snubbed a gentlemen who tried to woo her with "many arguments to prove the papists":

When I was returning home from Mrs. Al: he sed. You would not take pity if one should grow distracted for you. There is noe fear of yt sed I. Then as he took me by the hand he sed what a hand was there to be adoared. I answered him looking upon a tuft of grass which had growing init a yellow flower: That spier of grass was fitter to be adoared than my hand ...⁶⁹

The widowed Lady Anne Newdigate was equally resilient to appeals from suitors and intermediaries. Elizabeth Ashburnham wrote on behalf of Matthew Saunders to communicate his "continually [being] tossed between the rackets of hope & despair" in his efforts to secure Lady Newdigate's agreement to marry. She stressed "none could love" Lady Anne more than Matthew did, arguing this should compensate for his inability to provide financially what she truly deserved.⁷⁰ After a fretful and protracted courtship, Anne finally confirmed she did not wish to remarry.⁷¹ Lady Elizabeth Delaval questioned men's confidence in their wooing powers, reflecting "all men are apt enough to flatter themselves that a woman's heart is to be gained whenever the attempt is made in good earnest".⁷²

⁶⁷ Mary Astell 'Reflections upon Marriage' in B. Hill (ed.) *The First English Feminist: "Reflections upon Marriage" and Other Writings by Mary Astell* (Aldershot 1986) p.105

⁶⁸ Katherine Austen *Miscellanies*. BL Add.MS 4454, f.95

⁶⁹ Ibid. f.96

⁷⁰ Nutt *Gossip from a Muniment-Room*. p.128

⁷¹ Ibid. pp.117-38

⁷² 'The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval' p.337

How individuals' attitudes towards love related to views expressed in contemporary literature is difficult to judge.⁷³ Some writers drew on the wisdom and linguistic agility of artists in expressing the experiences of love, while there was concern about the effects of romantic literature on the young, and an eagerness by some adults to distance themselves from the genre. Montaigne complained women were taught to think only about "the traffic of love" from childhood, with all "their graces, accomplishments, their knowledge, their speech, their whole instruction" being but a means to ensnare a husband, while Thomas Salter warned against "the greate infection of youth"; that is, women's reading "lascivious Songs, filthie Ballads, and undecent bookes".⁷⁴ Thomas Powell more specifically advised merchants to dissuade their daughters from "Reading Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia" and learning the "arts in arrainging mens affections" through superficial accomplishments and physical adornment. Instead, girls and young women should "read the grounds of good Huswifery" and learn to perform the tasks required to run an efficient household.⁷⁵

Lucy Hutchinson shamefacedly confessed that during her youth she had not been "convinc'd of the vanity of conversation which was not scandously wicked" and had "thought it no sin to learne or heare wittie songs and amorous sonnetts or poems, and twenty things of that kind". As a result, she had become "the confident in all the loves that

⁷³ See R. Mandrou *Introduction to Modern France, 1500-1640. An Essay in Historical Psychology* trans. R.E. Hallmark (New York 1976) p.9; H.M. Richmond *The School of Love: The Evolution of the Stuart Love Lyric* (Princeton 1964) p.259 for a stress on the particular nature of artists and writers and scepticism about the relationship between the arts and sensibilities; see L. Martines *Society and History in English Renaissance Verse* (Oxford 1985) Preface for the value of poetry as an insight into reality

⁷⁴ Montaigne *Sur des Vers de Virgil* pp.29-30; Thomas Salter 'A Mirrhor Mete for all Mothers, Matrones and Maidens, Intituled the Mirrhor of Modestie' (1579) in S. Trill, K. Chedgzoy & M. Osborne (eds.) *Lay by Your Needles, Take the Pen. Women Writing in England, 1500-1700* (London 1997) p.47

⁷⁵ Thomas Powell *The Art of Thriving. Or, The Plaine Path-way to Preferment. Together with the Myserie and Misery of Lending and Borrowing* (London 1654) p.114; see also Salter 'A Mirrhor Mete for all Mothers'. pp.44-50

were managed among my mother's young women".⁷⁶ The Countess of Warwick similarly recounted that, upon her marriage, she had been

as vain, as idle, and as inconsiderate a person as was possible, minding nothing but curious dressing and fine and rich clothes, and spending my precious time in nothing else but reading romances, and in reading and seeing plays ...

Under the pious influence of her husband's family's household, she had cast aside "idle books" and claimed not to have seen more than two plays during the rest of her life.⁷⁷ Margaret Cavendish was careful to point out what she was *not* seeking to do in her writings; namely, tell "Tales ... Romanticall" that formed "foolish Amorisities, and desperate Follies". Should any of her writings "create Amorous thoughts in idle brains" she "would make blotts instead of letters".⁷⁸ Links between language, amorous literature and ill-advised feelings, expectations and liaisons therefore seem to have been strongly felt.

Both the Countess of Warwick and Lucy Hutchinson described their courtships in sentimental and stylized ways, and were perhaps conditioned by the literature they had read.⁷⁹ That the Countess of Warwick's marriage was not happy (recorded in her meditations, but omitted wholly from her autobiography) perhaps particularly influenced how she described its formation. A focus on the clandestine nature of her courtship, her youthful appetite for frippery and secular entertainment, and her lack of attention to spiritual direction formed useful implicit excuses for the unsatisfactory nature of her marriage, especially as she had been so tenacious in refusing matches proposed by her father.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Hutchinson *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*. p.17

⁷⁷ Crofton Croker *Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick*. pp.21,22

⁷⁸ Margaret Cavendish 'Nature's Picture, Drawn by Francis Pencil to the Life' (1656) 'To the reader' in Trill *et al.* *Lay by Your Needles*. pp.202-3

⁷⁹ See Houlbrooke *English Family* p.77

⁸⁰ See *Occasional Meditations by Lady Warwick, 1663-1677*. BL Add.MS 27,358 passim

Individuals who acted as intermediaries could immerse themselves in the language of love. Constance Fowler's letters give the impression that she experienced much emotional excitement over the courtship of her brother, Herbert, with Katherine Thimelby (see chapter six), while those acting on William Saunders' behalf were strongly sentimental, expressing personal anguish at Lady Anne Newdigate's resistance to remarriage, as well as reporting William's desperation as a rejected suitor. The following, from a letter by Francis Beaumont to Anne once she had finally ended the courtship, could have come from Mr. Saunders himself, giving as it does such a strong sense of loss:

I can do no more, I can say no more, but only this, that I am heavy, sad and weary; weary of my life, weary of myself, and weary whatsoever hereto fore did most delight me, but most weary of all in thinking of my dearest and worthiest, unfortunate Lady whose wits are furthest from home, when they should be readiest to do her the best service.⁸¹

The possibility that declarations of love were not wholly genuine, but simply a superficial and manipulative use of language, cannot be ignored. Roger Lowe's diary contains a string of solemn pledges of love that he made to different women; the degree to which he could have transferred intense, genuine affection from one woman to another so quickly and frequently is perhaps questionable.⁸² Individuals, particularly those writing retrospectively in memoirs and autobiographies, might have presented their perceptions and experiences of love in ways they thought would be acceptable, rather than as honest accounts of their feelings. From Lucy Hutchinson's concern to avoid any misapprehension that her future husband's love had been excessive or lustful we can infer that she had a strong sense of the 'right' way to present marital happiness. Moreover, her careful wording had parallels with published prescriptions on how love should be exercised and controlled (see chapter nine). It would be wrong, however, simply to doubt the veracity of sources that reveal individuals' emotions and attitudes on personal matters. Account has to be

81 Letter from Francis Beaumont to Lady Anne Newdigate, undated, in Nutt *Gossip from a Muniment Room* p.131

82 Sachse *The Diary of Roger Lowe*. passim

taken of the complex array of constraints, influences and motivations that affected individuals' thoughts and experiences of love, as well as how they recorded their emotions.

Concluding remarks

Love in early-modern England was seen both as a dangerous agent and an essential ingredient in partnerships. These contrasting perceptions sprang from different readings of the sentiment, deriving from an equation of love with lust on the one hand, and the representation of love as a corollary of religious faith and the linchpin of marital (and familial) stability on the other. It was therefore the root of a couple's love - religious and family duty or sexual appetite - that determined whether it was good or bad. As would be expected, marriage formed a watershed between unacceptable and threatening types of love: it gave sanction to conjugal relations and provided a formal structure in which love could serve the interests of family and community. However, love within marriage that showed too great a passion was also discouraged, since it was seen as impermanent and destabilising.

Attitudes towards, and perceptions of, love reveal interesting nuances in gender dynamics and individuals' lives and relationships between senior and junior family members. They were not simply manifestations of patriarchy. Women could wield power, not least that of an emotional kind, in the processes of marriage formation and in marriage itself.⁸³ Some marriages formed genuine partnerships, while economically independent women (usually widows) could exercise power of a more concrete kind, choosing, if they wished, to ignore pledges of love and requests for marriage altogether.

⁸³ See Astell 'Reflections upon Marriage' p.105; Sachse *The Diary of Roger Lowe*. p.20

It seems that women were always the pursued, never the pursuers. But this could have as much to do with inhibited recording and established propriety as reality.⁸⁴

Love that can be described as 'romantic' fuelled some courtships. But other relationships, before and after marriage, were sustained by a more robust bonding, at the heart of which lay companionship. The existence of love, or its potential, was usually accommodated and was, indeed, expected in the process of forging marriages and was often, but not always, shaped by established views on gender roles. It is too simplistic to assume that expectations of love, fuelled by a plethora of artistic literature, were frequently dashed by familial authority. Marriage formation involved weighing up factors that affected the wider interests of the families concerned with the happiness of the couple themselves. Love could determine whether negotiations were pursued. Conversely, young women such as the Countess of Warwick and Margaret Cavendish, wooed by suitors in clandestine courtships, claimed to have been attentive to more practical matters. Just as importantly, when familial conflict arose because young gentlemen and women sought a spouse independently, reconciliation was usually achieved, reflecting the broader exercise of love within and across families.

⁸⁴ However, see J.D. Marshall (ed.) *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752* (Manchester 1967) pp.103-104 for Stout's claims of having been pursued by an older woman

Common elements

A flexible adherence to patriarchy emerges from the marital conduct books. Perhaps recognising that real life would almost certainly frustrate attempts to practise 'pure patriarchy', the authors described a complex code for sharing and dividing family and household management duties. Male authority over women formed the essential premise for the writers' advice. But wives were granted full discretion in some areas and were called upon to offer their husbands counsel and to assume full authority in their husbands' absence. In addition, the books stressed that a husband's dominance over his wife - and parents' authority over their children - should be tempered by affection.¹ A complex picture of marital roles therefore becomes evident that can be summed up by the phrase 'benign inequality'. A similar picture is gained of views on how marriages should be forged: parents, or their substitutes, had the right and responsibility to sanction matches, but their consenting role should not be applied in a dictatorial manner, or in ways that would threaten the future happiness of the couple concerned and the future stability of the families involved. Just as husbands and wives were counselled to perform a delicate balancing act, families were advised to fulfil their respective roles in marriage formation sensitively to preserve a diversity of interests.

Counsel on, and perceptions and experiences of, love show that a rigid a distinction between independent courtship and marriages initiated by other parties is misplaced. There was a continuum: independently made marriages based on infatuation or enduring love were at one extreme; arranged matches in which love's existence, or its potential, was credited with little or no importance were at the other. Neither was deemed ideal. In

¹ Matthew Griffith *Bethel: Or, A Forme for Families in Which All Sorts, of Both Sexes, are So Squared, and Framed by the Word of God, as They May Best Serve in Their Severall Places, for Usefull Pieces in God's Building* (London 1633) pp.230, 326; William Whately *A Bride Bush or Wedding Sermon* (London, 1617; Amsterdam, 1975) Preface, pp.17-18; William Gouge *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622; Amsterdam, 1976) pp.258,259; D. Leverenz *The Language of Puritan Feeling: An Exploration in Literature, Psychology and Social History* (New Jersey 1980) pp.7-8,81

the majority of actual cases, personal happiness and emotional fulfilment were weighed against family interests, and a marriage contracted on the basis of mutual consent and agreement. There was flexibility in how this confluence of factors and interests was achieved, at whose instigation, and at what stage. The apparent tension between romanticised views on love that can be inferred from contemporary literature and marriage formation in practice therefore disappears. Love was one factor within a raft of others. It was not afforded especial pre-eminence, but neither was it ignored or discouraged nor its importance downplayed.

Young adults' experience of love was linked inextricably to their position in their family and related constraints on their behaviour. That clandestine relationships and even elopements occurred is testament to the strong pressures placed on some individuals to fulfil their families' expectations and their resultant compulsion to rebel. However, most young men and women could square their aspirations for personal happiness with their family's wishes, while families were generally reconciled to matches that were not of their instigation (often, following intervention from more distant relatives).² When individuals found a partner independently, they were keen to show their awareness of social hierarchy and respect for familial interests. In turn, these conditioned their capacity and inclination for love.

The relationship between the marital conduct book advice and individuals' experiences of marriage formation and marriage itself remains elusive. But authors saw forging a match as a process demanding consent and contentment on all sides; the marital relationship as forming a carefully-balanced exercise of authority and power (loaded, of course, in favour of the husband and father); and marriage as an institution in which affection had a strong role to play. These strands of thinking accord with those that emanate from individual families. Essentially common maxims and ideals pervaded

² See M. Ingram 'Spousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c.1350-1640' in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London 1981) p.57 for conclusions that clandestine marriages were relatively rare

recorded thinking of all types, which contemporaneous satire seems to have confirmed, rather than undermined. Historians' tendency to be cautious about extending contentions about the currency of love and relatively independent courtship to the gentry and nobility of early-modern England seems misplaced.³ With the caveat that love had to fit with other factors and concerns, it had a genuine place within marriage formation and married life for the social elite.

³ D. Cressy *Birth, Marriage and Death. Ritual, Religion and Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford 1997) p.234; M MacDonald *Mystical Bedlam. Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge 1981) p.92

Conclusions

Departing from Collinson's pessimistic view, this thesis has sought to demonstrate the congruity in attitudes, beliefs and experience pertaining to family relationships and gender roles in early-modern England.¹ That male supremacy should fundamentally shape thinking on power relationships within families was articulated strongly in advice literature and formed a heavy point of reference and rhetoric in personal documents. But the exercise of power revolved around ensuring family interests were served effectively. This is evident both in how lines of authority were framed prescriptively and from what we can infer about how family relationships were lived. Achieving stability, prosperity and enhancement could afford women considerable scope for action and assertion within, and on behalf of, their families. By definition, the process of securing marriages required negotiation across and between kinship networks. Female authority in this arena was legitimised and had substantial implications for families both in an immediate, material sense and for future generations. Apparent chinks in male supremacy and female subordination were not seen to place family and wider social order in a precarious position, but as necessary and desirable caveats to male dominance. Pragmatism overrode ideology.

Indeed, contemporary thinking was not so dogmatic as to deny women's scope for exercising their wit and skills. Although some of the marital conduct books portrayed women who acted outside the household and family as monsters, their attempts at female domestic entrapment were not absolute. Prescriptive literature within other genres was more liberal and appealed for greater female preparation for, and involvement in, 'matters of the world'. There was no perceived conflict between asserting ultimate male authority and women's judicious deployment of organisational skills and influence. Female subordination was not a complete oppression, therefore; it allowed and required women to

¹ P. Collinson *The Birth-pangs of Protestant England. Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London 1988) p.70

act in the best interests of their family and as joint (albeit deputy), scripturally-ordained governors with their husband.

Thinking on marriage formation recognised the value of couples enjoying compatibility, not least for family stability and peace within the wider community. Families were usually overtly sensitive to individual happiness and a couple's contentment. That both individual and family interest were fulfilled through a marriage was the ideal. In most instances, this was realised. When it was not, it was a frustrated expectation. A continuum existed, the extremes of which - coldly-arranged marriages and matches made with complete independence - appear to have been comparatively rare. Neither was condoned. The common aim was that all parties should be content with the outcome and that status and wealth were maintained, or preferably enhanced.

The motives behind marriage formation seem to have been remarkably uniform, at least in terms of the rhetoric in which they were couched. Individuals wishing to marry for love were keen to express their parallel concerns to preserve their family's interests and attend to practical matters. Family members, friends or agents who sought primarily to ensure pragmatic and financial goals were achieved were also usually concerned that prospects for individuals' happiness were not neglected. While this no doubt reflected, at least in part, both groups' adherence to established discourse, their feeling the need to demonstrate such adherence is significant. It must also be seen within the overarching maxim of marriage-making: individuals should marry their equal within the bounds of gendered-defined inequality. Equality in marriage partnership was defined in manifest ways, including comparable social status, wealth, age, religious belief, virtue and looks. It should ensure compatibility and therefore a successful marriage, for the couple and current and prospective generations of their families. It is therefore difficult to disentangle family interest and individual emotional fulfilment.

Not surprisingly, families were opportunistic in forging marriages, often pursuing multiple options simultaneously. They were also candid about the chances of reaching a conclusive outcome to any one of these. But this does not mean they took a mercenary approach. The merits of a prospective marriage were measured in diverse ways, including its affective strength. A match could be aborted for many reasons other than money, while the very process of negotiation tested whether two families could trust one another, whether each displayed an appropriate level of generosity and affability and, most fundamentally, whether each wished to be linked with the other. The makers of marriage sought to balance interests on several fronts: the personal and familial, the emotional and material, and the pragmatic and sentimental. That authors of the time - both those who wrote to be published and those who wrote for their family or friends - attempted to demarcate this balancing process in precise terms belies any notion that there were significant contradictions in thinking. Rather, there was a concern to manage an event that was perforce complicated and that was recognised as such. Potential tensions had to be resolved and diverse interests fulfilled, or at least reconciled, for a marriage to occur.

The process of marriage formation also highlights the complexity of family structures. Authority, decision-making and emotional relationships were neither confined to the nuclear family or household nor defined by gender. Good sense and demography necessitated a wider involvement, while genuinely-felt kinship ties sustained by respect and love played their part too. It is misplaced to assume that decisions of such import as those relating to creating marriages were the preserve of men, as Ezell has already highlighted.² However, it is also wrong to assume that approving matches was the preserve of parents or the nuclear family. Instead, it was a process that involved diffuse and senior members of the extended family. Women played principal roles in a network of negotiators and decision-makers, with some grandmothers, aunts and grand-aunts enjoying pre-eminence over parents in granting ultimate approval.

² Ezell, M.J.M. *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (London 1987) pp.34,161

Thinking on gender cannot be seen as prescribing rigid codes of behaviour for men and women within the family. The importance of 'public world' to women or the 'private world' to men cannot be dismissed (and, indeed, it is unhelpful to think in terms of 'public' and 'private')³. Prescriptions of male and female roles, and the actual activities of men and women, were determined heavily by factors other than gender. The life-cycle of individuals and families had a profound effect: the death of her husband could place a wealthy woman in a strong position, enabling her to refuse offers of marriage and potentially giving her the 'career option' of matriarch, perhaps 'female patriarch'. Even women who remarried, such as Lady Jane Cornwallis, could exercise a large degree of authority. Letters and treatises written by men as fathers, or concerned uncles, show the emotional importance their families held for them. Individuals' experiences within families, beyond the obvious, were not defined sharply by gender. Moreover, love and affection held sway in family relationships (both nuclear and extended), as shown by how conflicts regarding choice of marriage partner were regularly resolved.

A careful distinction was made in contemporary thinking between licit and illicit conjugal love, while wider affection within families was coloured by a strong sense of contractual obligation and responsibility. This does not undermine the authenticity of early-modern love. But it does highlight our need to consider the factors and contexts that coloured emotions and relationships. It also underlines that, while we need to be sensitive to differences that resulted from individuals' social status, we should not assume that these were necessarily extreme. Romantic love had little currency for the gentry and nobility in approaches to marriage formation and marriage itself. However, love of a different hue - not markedly different from that experienced and prized by those of lower social status - was important.

³ See C.M. Jagodzinski *Privacy and Print. Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-century England* (Charlottesville 1999) pp.2-3 regarding ambivalent early-modern attitudes towards privacy; P.R. Backscheider 'Introduction' in P.R. Backscheider & T. Dykstal (eds.) *The Intersections of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England* (London 1996) pp.2-4 for the difficulties of distinguishing between public and private

The relationship between prescriptive literature and individuals' attitudes and actions remains more intractable than apparent contradictions in the attitudes and actions themselves. It is unhelpful to see prescription and evidence of practice as separate entities. Both the advisers and those who were advised (or for whom advisory literature was at least written) were influenced by and, whether consciously or unconsciously, influenced the creation and evolution of dominant thinking and attitudes. Although it is important to define source types, we need to be sensitive to their common provenance and the nebulous divisions between them. Personal memoirs do not necessarily provide a more accurate insight into past experiences and attitudes than explicitly advisory or prescriptive sources. Neither can the latter be dismissed as bearing little relation to actual experience. Individuals who wrote accounts of their own lives generally showed a keenness to conform to established genres. Moreover, the personal writings studied in this thesis often reflect the views expounded in published treatises, with heavy repetition of maxims and analogies.⁴ At the same time, the treatises themselves contained different emphases depending on their purpose. While not negating the coherence of early-modern thinking on gender roles and relationships, marriage formation and marriage itself, all these factors show that thinking was multi-layered and multi-faceted.

⁴ See, for example, those highlighted in chapters three and eight

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